

**CHRISTMAS PREPARATIONS ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN  
PERSONAL FINANCES AND CAREERS**

- **Over 1.5 million people will ‘pull a sickie’ this Christmas to go gift shopping**
- **We spend almost twice as much time looking for one Christmas present as we spend choosing a pension**

It may only be one day of the year, but in the winter months preparing for Christmas takes priority over both personal finances and career. A survey by Scottish Widows\* reveals that 37% of people take time off work to do their Christmas shopping, with an estimated 1.7 million people expected to ‘pull a sickie’ or ‘fake a doctors appointment’ in order to finish their Christmas preparations this year\*\*.

Of those saying they would take time off work for Christmas preparations, the younger generation appears to be most likely to fake ‘illness’: over 320,000 18-24 year olds (6%) are expected to take a ‘sickie’ this Christmas to buy presents for friends and family.

Regionally, Londoners throw the lowest level of ‘Christmas sickies’, with only 2% of people faking illness to go shopping, while Edinburgh tops the chart, with 14% of people expecting to make pretend excuses in order to hit the shops this year.

Women are far more prepared for Christmas than men, with 82% buying Christmas presents in November or earlier, in contrast to only 55% of men. Women are also less likely to buy presents at the last minute, while 37% of men will leave it until the week before Christmas, or even later, to buy

presents, as opposed to 14% of women. A very tardy 7% of men will leave it right until Christmas Eve or Christmas Day to buy their gifts.

Not only do they buy them earlier but women also spend far longer finding gifts, with 79% spending anywhere between a day and a month searching for the perfect present. This is in contrast to men, 28% of whom will spend half a day or less looking for presents.

George Andrew, Head of Market Relations at Scottish Widows, commenting on the results said: “It seems that the time we are prepared to spend on buying presents for Christmas heavily outweighs the time we are willing to spend on our personal finances. Our research shows that, on average, we spend more time choosing a Christmas present for someone else than we spend on choosing a pension for ourselves\*\*\*. Of course we all love the excitement of giving and receiving presents, but it’s clear that we should be giving more time and thought to our finances – after all Christmas is only one day of the year but good financial planning can set you up for a lifetime.”

The survey is part of an ongoing campaign, ‘Preparation Nation’, in which Scottish Widows is taking a closer look at our attitude to preparing for the future. If you want to find out how you can make a difference to your financial future log on to [www.preparation-nation.co.uk](http://www.preparation-nation.co.uk)

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**Notes to editors:-**

\*The survey was carried out on behalf of Scottish Widows by BMRB, which interviewed a random selection of 1648 adults. Interviews were conducted across the

country on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2006 and the results have been weighted to the profile of all adults.

\*\* 3% of people asked have admitted to 'pulling a sickie' or 'faking a doctors appointment' to go Christmas Shopping: this equates to over 1.7 million nationwide.

\*\*\* 44% of people with Pensions spent less than an hour choosing it, while 74% spend more than an hour choosing Christmas gifts for friends and family.

**Scottish Widows** was founded in 1815 as Scotland's first mutual life office. Becoming part of Lloyds TSB Group in 2000, Scottish Widows has become one of the most recognized brands in the life, pensions and investment industry in the UK. The product range includes ordinary long term insurance, such as life assurance, pensions, annuities and permanent health insurance and investment products. Using a multi-sales network of Financial Advisers, Direct Sales, Direct Marketing, the Internet and via the branch network of Lloyds TSB, Scottish Widows currently employs about 4,000 people.

Scottish Widows news releases appear on our website at [www.scottishwidows.co.uk/mediacentre](http://www.scottishwidows.co.uk/mediacentre)

Also, visit the dedicated website at [www.preparation-nation.co.uk](http://www.preparation-nation.co.uk) to find useful tools and information on preparing your future.