

**Press Release**

**MISTLETOE AND WHINE: BRITS AREN’T TOO CRACKERS ABOUT CHRISTMAS**

* 1 in 5 (19%) of us hate Christmas, according to new research by Virgin Trains
* Putting up Christmas decorations and spending time with family are the most divisive issues
* York is the most festive city in the UK whilst Aberdeen is the least likely to spread Christmas joy
* VIDEO: Virgin Trains and Matt Edmondson team up to spread some Christmas cheer with a light-hearted look at the ‘scroogiest’ festive posts from the nation’s newsfeeds

**London, XX December 2017:** Forget Brexit or Strictly Come Dancing; it’s Christmas that really divides us, with a clear split between the 81% of us who love the festive season and the 19% who can’t wait for it all to be over. Virgin Trains used social media analysis to measure positive and negative sentiment around Christmas, with the results showing that almost 1 in 5 (19%) of all Christmas-related tweets are negative.

The study by Virgin Trains analysed over 500,000 Christmas related tweets to create a comprehensive view of our feelings towards the festive season, and the results show a nation that risks being torn apart by its polarised view on festive family time and Christmas decorations. We hate wrapping presents more than Brussel sprouts, but as many of us suspected Love Actually unites (almost) all of us. Here’s how we really feel about our favourite festive traditions…

 **Positive Negative**

Early Christmas songs 12% 88%

Wrapping presents 33% 67%

* Brussel sprouts 38% 62%
* Carol singers 41% 59%

Christmas decorations 55% 45%

Festive family time 58% 42%

* Mince pies 71% 29%

Michael Bublé 72% 28%

* Mulled wine 83% 17%
* Pigs in blankets 86% 14%
* Christmas lights 88% 12%

Love Actually 94% 6%

* Extra time off work 95% 5%

Christmas adverts provoke strong feelings in us all, with the volume of negative and positive tweets spiking when this year’s offerings were released in mid-November. Festive good-feelings are likely to dramatically snowball from Monday December 18th, as we enter the final working week before the Christmas break. Positive sentiment towards carol singing increases on average by 34% from mid-November to mid-December as we begin to get into the Christmas spirit.

**Seasons Tweetings**

**VIDEO:** As an antidote to the bah-humbug brigade and to help to bring a smile to even the grumpiest Grinch around, Virgin Trains is calling out the scrooges to help spread some Christmas cheer. With the help of presenter, Matt Edmondson, they have handpicked some of the crankiest Christmas-related tweets from the British public. Watch the full video here: <https://youtu.be/edwl6cRn1m8>

Matt Edmondson, Presenter, said, “Much like my family’s attitude to cracking out the board games on Boxing Day, us Brits are a divided bunch when it comes to getting into the Christmas spirit. From moaning about merry carol singers and bright festive lights to dreading Michael Bublé’s latest offering (for the record, I’m team Bublé all the way), there really are some scroogey tweets going around. I have my grumpy moments too (no, I don’t want to sample your sprouts, even if you’ve used Nigella’s recipe), but it’s easy to forget that this is the time of year to celebrate with loved ones and put our differences aside – even serious ones like Brussel sprout preferences. Amongst all the madness, it’s been good to see the funny side with Virgin Trains, as we welcome in the silly season (warts and all) and spread some cheer this Christmas.”

**A festive forecast**

* Aberdeen is the ‘scroogiest’ city – with almost half (49%) of the city’s festive tweets classed as negative
* 89% of tweets from cheery folk in York are positive, making them the most festive city in the UK and the most excited about their work Christmas party (81%)
* People in Leeds love their Christmas lights (86%) and are the biggest fans of ‘The Bublé’ (81%) turning up their stereos to capture his much-loved Christmas tunes
* Liverpudlians can’t say no to ‘pigs in blankets’ with the city loving the festive delicacy the most (86%)
* Mancunians will be watching their waist lines with 56% worried about overeating, with the city hating Brussel sprouts the most (66% negative)
* Londoners are a soppy lot with 42% of the overall UK positive sentiment for Love Actually coming from the capital

Patrick McCall, Co-Chairman, Virgin Trains, said, “Here at Virgin Trains we love Christmas. It’s all about connecting friends and family; and that’s at the heart of what we do. This year, whilst we connect friends and families on our journeys on the West and East Coast, we have a festive mission: to spread a little Christmas cheer everywhere we go in a light-hearted way that we can all relate to.”

<https://youtu.be/edwl6cRn1m8>

**– ENDS –**

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**Notes to Editors**

\* Research through Social Listening with Blurrt on behalf of Virgin Trains based on tweets from November to December 2016, from 500,000 Twitter posts.

**About Virgin Trains:**

Stagecoach and Virgin are working in partnership to operate the East Coast and West Coast inter-city routes under the Virgin Trains brand. Together, they are on track to revolutionise rail travel across the UK.

The combined network connects some of the nation’s most iconic destinations including Glasgow, Liverpool, Birmingham, Manchester, Edinburgh, Newcastle, Leeds, York and London.

Virgin Trains is committed to delivering a high speed, high frequency service, offering shorter journey times, more comfortable travel and excellent customer service. Customers consistently rate Virgin Trains as one of the top long-distance rail franchise operators in the National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) commissioned by industry watchdog, Transport Focus.

On the East Coast route, £140m is being invested to create a more personalised travel experience. We have already invested over £40m in our existing fleet, including £21m refurbishing the interiors and £16m towards improving the engines of our trains. Customers can now benefit from 42 additional services between Edinburgh and London every week, and an extra 22 Saturday services between Leeds and London – a total of 1.74 million additional seats since May 2016. 2018 will see the introduction of completely new Azuma trains being built in the UK by Hitachi.

The West Coast route has a proud record of challenging the status quo - from introducing tilting Pendolino trains, to a pioneering automated delay repay scheme and becoming the first franchised rail operator to offer m-Tickets for all ticket types.

Visit the Virgin Trains Media Room - virgintrains.co.uk/about/media-room - for the latest news, images and videos. Subscribe here for regular news from Virgin Trains.

Press Office: 0845 000 3333.

**About Blurrt:**

Blurrt is a leading social media analytics platform, collecting and understanding millions of social media posts in real time to find exactly what’s being said, who’s saying it, how people are feeling and understand why they’re feeling that way.