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£1.7bn Spent on Unwanted Gifts This Christmas

- Brits each received £31 worth of unwanted gifts this Christmas
- Clothes, jewellery and cosmetics among the most unpopular gifts
- Only 16% of people intend to cash-in on their unwanted gifts by selling them
- £4.6bn has been made by people selling unwanted gifts over the last five years
- However, Brits appear better at present-buying than the French and Italians

The British public spent £1.7bn on unwanted Christmas gifts this year, according to research Vivastreet.co.uk, the free local classified ads website.

On average, each person celebrating Christmas in the UK this year – 87% of the population (53.99m people)[†] – received up to two presents they did not want with their total value reaching £31 on average.

Vivastreet.co.uk surveyed over 2,000 people across Britain on what they received this Christmas and what they intend to do with their unwanted gifts. Only 16% of people will try to cash-in by selling their unwanted items. However, those not intending to sell their items appear to be missing out. Over the last five years, Brits who have sold unwanted gifts online have raised a total of £4.6bn[†].

However, the majority of the UK's unwanted gifts won't go to waste, 29% of people will give them to charity and 22% intend to use them as gifts to other people in the future. Only 3.5% will simply throw their unwanted items away.

Despite the traditional Christmas jumper making a come-back in the style stakes in 2011, it seems many people fell foul of fashion faux-pas when selecting gifts to give to friends and family. The largest proportion of unwanted Christmas gifts (37%) were either clothes or jewellery, while 31% of unwanted presents were personal care products such as cosmetics and perfumes.

In-laws give the worst gifts according to the research, closely followed by friends and children.

Karen Hamblen of Vivastreet.co.uk, said: “Despite the uncertain economic climate, the British public have once again been overcome with generosity this Christmas. Unfortunately,

in a lot of cases, that generosity seems to have been misplaced. Most people have received one or two unwanted presents this year but less than a fifth of people will try to convert them into cash to spend in the New Year.”

Compared to some other parts of Europe, the Brits have been relatively good when it comes to present-buying this year. In Italy, the average total value of unwanted gifts per person was £46 (€55), while in France each person received £60 (€72) worth of presents they didn't like. However, Brits are the most unlikely to sell their unwanted items compared to their European counterparts, in France one in four people (25%) will sell their unwanted gifts to raise cash while in Italy, 27% intend to sell their items.

Karen Hamblen, continued: “Brits are missing out compared to their European cousins. In France and Italy many more people intend to sell their unwanted presents with the vast majority doing so online while in Britain we appear less eager to cash-in. Given the economic outlook for 2012, this is a trend we should try to break. For thousands of people every penny will count next year and there is nothing wrong in trying to raise some extra cash by selling things you don't need or want online.”

Nearly 2,000 adverts were posted on Vivastreet.co.uk on Christmas Day as people attempted to offload their unwanted items. Traffic to the site more than doubled between the 25th and 27th December as people searched for items to buy as they attempted to fill any gaps in their Christmas wish-list.

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Vivastreet.co.uk is a free, classified ads site. It ranks among the largest classified ads site in the UK and is ninth largest in the world.

Vivastreet offers users a simple and sociable shopping and selling experience through its extensive choice of adverts ranging from buy and sell services, properties, cars, events, pets, friendships, love and much more, all in their local area. Vivastreet operates across Europe, Latin America, North America, North Africa and Australasia – in total 18 countries across the world. Through its rigorous manual moderation procedures, Vivastreet ensures its users a safe and secure experience.

* Based on the latest ONS population figures excluding religions that do not celebrate Christmas

† Based on the number of people who have sold unwanted gifts in the last five years and how much they have raised on average - Vivastreet.co.uk Unwanted Gifts Survey and ONS population data