

PRESS RELEASE

## THE GREAT RECONNECTION: THE GIFT OF REUNION TO BRING REAL JOY TO THESE HOLIDAYS

*New study reveals Australian parents' attitudes towards the upcoming festive season and what 'joy' really means in a pandemic way of life.*

**Sydney, December 2021** – 2021 has been another tough year for Australians with lockdowns keeping families and friends apart, again, for extended periods of time. Major milestone celebrations have been postponed or cancelled and for some, newborn family members are yet to be held.

But while the ongoing pandemic has brought despair and negative experiences to many, Australian parents are looking ahead with changed priorities and plans around travel to reunite with loved ones. According to a new report by [Real Insurance](#), many parents are feeling grateful that they have had the chance to rediscover the simple things in life that bring them joy (73%).

The *Real Joy 2021 Report*, commissioned by Real Insurance, explores life's simple joys experienced by parents and families during the pandemic and recent lockdowns. Based on a survey of over 1,200 Australian parents, this study looks at the attitudes of parents and how they are feeling about the festive season, reuniting with family, holiday travel and what they are most grateful for as we soon enter a new year.

The research found that Australian families have missed each other dearly (50%) and about 1 in 3 are now taking advantage of the lifted restrictions to reconnect with family members during this festive season (35%). Parents reported to be excited about the upcoming social events and parties (69%) as they report their children have missed the celebrations and social events (64%).

For almost 1 in 6, this festive season is set to become a very emotional one as grandparents and grandchildren are looking forward to a long-awaited reunion, with 7% set to reconnect following the latest round of lockdowns and 3% seeing each other for the first time again since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020. One in 20 (5%) are even meeting their grandparents or grandchildren for the first time ever this festive season after restrictions prevented them to visit each other.

Despite many lucky parents who have the option to reconnect with their family in person again, there are also still others (16%) who have no choice even though they want to due to ongoing restrictions.

**Family Psychologist, Clare Rowe, commented:** “The restricted access for physical connection to family members have meant that Australians have recognised the value in spending time with loved ones. For many it will be an emotional reunion being able to physically spend time with immediate family members that may not have been seen since last Christmas. Restrictions on families spending time together have resulted in a renewed

energy to appreciate the simple joys this Christmas and a reset on what is important to focus on.”

With international and interstate travel restrictions easing, people are obviously keen to reunite with their family members. From the 7 in 10 parents (27%) who have relatives that live interstate or overseas, a quarter (27%) have already booked a holiday, with 1 in 5 (18%) planning to do so soon and about the same portion (21%) still uncertain. Despite this, most of those travelling are staying within their state (41%) or taking a trip interstate (40%) with just 1 in 7 set to fly overseas (16%).

However, parents have mixed feelings about travelling to reconnect with their family this festive season. While 1 in 4 Australian parents (24%) have made plans to reunite with family and friends who live interstate or overseas, the majority (75%) remain apprehensive about venturing overseas with their family. Three in 4 of those surveyed said that travelling overseas is out of the question for now and feel uncertain (36%) about the prospect, apprehensive (30%), anxious (18%) or scared (10%).

“Generally speaking, families are still risk adverse when it comes to travelling and need to weigh up the health needs of their families and also the prospects of further lockdowns and disruptions to travel plans. This comes despite not seeing extended family members for some months, many families would rather take a “wait and see” approach when it comes to the viability and success of both interstate and international travel,” said Rowe.

Following the events of 2021, the overall sentiment is that families (78%) want to stay safe and have a low-key holiday season as we round out the year.

### **Enjoying the simple things: A new perspective on life**

Families were forced to spend more time together through lockdowns and despite the challenges of home schooling or entertaining children while working from home, lockdowns have given many the time to reevaluate their priorities. Parents reported to have rediscovered the simple things in life when spending time with family (73%), with the top three joys including going for walks or exercise (53%), watching favourite movies or shows together (44%) and sharing what’s going on in each other’s lives (41%).

Over two-thirds (69%) feel lockdowns have shifted their attitudes on life’s most important priorities. While parents are still looking to spend up and celebrate newfound freedoms (61%), connecting with family will be the focus over giving gifts this year (71%).

“In previous years, Australians may have taken for granted that they would be spending time with loved ones over Christmas. The focus may therefore have been on tasks to complete around the Christmas season, shopping and gifting and organising social events. In a post-lockdown era, families are gifted the opportunity to pair back and curate their 2021 Christmas based on their newfound priorities and what is important to them. It is therefore of little surprise that many Australian’s report letting stress-inducing or money-spending activities slide in replace of a similar and slower holiday period where simply being in the physical presence of loved ones is enough”, added Rowe.

While 1 in 4 (26%) are keen for life to return to normal and 4 in 5 kids are happy to be back at school, there are some downsides according to some parents. The Real Joys 2021 Report found that 1 in 3 (34%) are concerned they may lose time for some simple family joys as they'll be spending less time at home, while a quarter (24%) say they'll really miss the extra time spent together as a family.

Despite another year faced with the challenges of the pandemic and lockdowns, as we head into 2022, Australian parents said they are most grateful for family (82%), health and wellbeing (67%), friends (56%), simple joys (50%) and happiness (46%) – all of which outranked economic sustainability and employment (38%), suggesting it's the simple things in life that we are often most grateful for.

### Further findings from the research

#### **Rediscovering life's simple joys**

- 7 in 10 parents of all ages are now placing more importance on quality family time due to their experiences through the pandemic (71%)
- 7 in 10 feel the lockdowns helped their family rediscover the simple things in life that bring them joy (73%) e.g., having family and friends over, enjoying family time at home, even just going shopping, or exercising
- 1 in 2 believe they will be spending more time together post pandemic than pre pandemic (51%)
- 3 in 4 feel that rediscovering life's joys has been at least one silver lining of the pandemic and lockdown experience (76%)

#### **Returning to normal**

- Parents feelings about 'returning to normal':
  - Happy to get back to the old schedule (26%)
  - Will miss some aspects but overall prefer to get back to the old schedule (38%)
  - Will really miss the extra time spent together (24%)
- 3 in 5 with family pets report the pandemic has elevated the importance of their pet's role in the family (e.g., bonding more with them and realising the wellbeing benefits provided to the family) (62%)
- Almost 1 in 2 parents feel their family has embraced being homebodies or will find it hard to re-adjust (48%).

#### **Reconnecting with loved ones**

- 1 in 2 parents of all ages have extremely or considerably missed their extended family during lockdowns (50%)
- 1 in 3 have plans this festive season to reconnect with extended family they haven't seen in some time (35%)
- 1 in 5 would like to but cannot due to restrictions (19%), a further 14% are still left unsure.

## Post Pandemic Priorities

- 7 in 10 parents of all ages feel the lockdowns have shifted their family's attitudes towards life's most important priorities (69%)
- These shifts in priority most commonly include;
  - More gratitude for the simple joys in life (67%)
  - More gratitude for each other (63%)
  - More appreciation of shared simple joys in life (58%)
  - More focus on the importance of wellbeing (56%)
  - More joy from time spent with family or friends over material things (51%)

Further insights from the research can be found on the [Real Insurance](#) website

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## About the research

The Real Joys 2021 Report forms part of the Real Insurance Research Series. In its latest instalment, this study explores life's simple joys experienced by Australian parents and families during the pandemic and recent lockdowns. The report looks at the attitudes of parents and how they are feeling about the festive season, reuniting with family, holiday travel and what they are grateful for as we soon enter 2022.

The report is compiled based on research commissioned by Real Insurance and conducted by CoreData between 16 November and 19 November 2021.

The research was conducted via a quantitative online survey, gathering 1,241 responses from Australians over 18 with children of all ages.

## About Real Insurance

Real Insurance is an award-winning provider of insurance products, specialising in life, funeral, pet, car, home and bike insurance. In the market since 2005, Real Insurance has protected the quality of life of many Australians, through the delivery of innovative insurance products. Real Insurance is the proud recipient of many product and service awards, recently being announced the winner of the 2022 ProductReview awards for Life Insurance and Funeral Insurance, and the Reader's Digest 2022 Gold Quality Service Awards for Funeral Insurance and Pet Insurance. Real Insurance is a trading name of Greenstone Financial Services Pty Ltd.