

4 READING

- a Read the article once. How many friends does the average American have?
- _____.

b Read the article again and choose the best answer.

- 1 Most people in the Cornell University study had spoken about something important with...
a one person.
b two people.
c more than two people.
- 2 The news published by Facebook is different from the results in the Cornell study because...
a the people are different ages.
b the studies are from different years.
c the relationships aren't the same.
- 3 According to a previous study, people had _____ close friends in the past.
a more b the same number of c fewer
- 4 The number of people with no close friends is _____ it was in the past.
a higher than b the same as c lower than
- 5 The results of the Cornell study show that Americans today are _____ they used to be.
a more sociable than
b as sociable as
c less sociable than

d Complete the sentences with one of the **highlighted** words or phrases.

- 1 I found an old painting by chance while I was cleaning the attic.
- 2 I wouldn't _____ my son with my phone. He'll probably break it.
- 3 How much money does _____ earn per year?
- 4 They talked about _____ first, and then moved on to the less important things.
- 5 The richer parts of town _____ with the poorer outskirts.
- 6 Some teenagers are _____ because they spend so much time on their computers.

Your friends in numbers



HOW MANY FRIENDS does **the average person** have? A researcher at Cornell University in the USA has recently done a study into this question, by finding out the number of friends a typical American has. He has just published the results. The researcher interviewed more than 2,000 adults aged 18 and over in his study. He asked them to list the names of the people they had discussed **serious matters** with in the last six months. About 48% of the people taking part gave the researcher one name, 18% gave him two, and about 29% gave him more than two.

These results **contrast dramatically** with the news published by social networking site Facebook recently. They said that the average user on the site has 130 friends. The Cornell University study found the average number of friends to be a lot lower – 2.03 to be exact. The researcher from Cornell has explained that the difference lies in the definition of the word *friend*. A friend on Facebook may be a person that the user has met **by chance** or someone that they will never meet in real life. However, the friends in his study are close friends, who participants feel comfortable discussing their problems with.

In a similar study conducted 25 years ago, participants had a higher number of close friends. Then, the average number was three. Despite the lower number, the researcher does not believe that people are **getting more isolated**. Instead he thinks it's a sign that they are becoming better at choosing who they can **trust** with their secrets.

This is supported by the number of people in the study who could not think of any names of close friends they would discuss their personal problems with. The percentage of these participants is the same this time as it was 25 years ago. In both studies, just over 4% of the participants gave researchers no names. Apparently, the people who fall into this category are more likely to be men, or people with less education.

In general, the researcher from Cornell regards these findings as positive. In his opinion, they suggest that, at least in the case of Americans, people are not becoming less sociable.