

Queuing

Callum: Hello, I'm Callum Robertson and this is London Life. Today's programme is about a very British habit, or something that we always think is very British. And that is the topic of queuing. Waiting in a line to pay for something, to go somewhere or to do something.

The topic came to mind while I was waiting in a queue in the supermarket to buy my lunch. It was a very long queue that went all the way along one aisle and round the back of the shop. I wouldn't normally wait in such a long queue but I know at this particular supermarket at this particular time of day they have a lot of staff at the check-outs and the queue moves very quickly.

While I was waiting I thought how calm, patient and polite the people in the queue were and that is something that is often experienced in Britain and not always in other places. I remember once in a country that I won't name, I was at an airport waiting to check in. I arrived early and there was a short queue waiting for the check-in to open. I was the second or third person in the queue and gradually a line of passengers arrived behind me. I was glad I had arrived early as the queue then was very long. However, as soon as the check-in opened there was a mad rush and all the people who had been behind me, pushed forward, all wanting to check-in at the same time. I ended up more or less at the back of the queue.

The British are traditionally much better organised when it comes to queuing although a recent survey has revealed that our attitudes to queuing are changing and particularly in London we are getting less patient.

Greg Twitcher is Vice President of Visa UK who commissioned a survey to look into our attitudes to queuing. What reasons does he give for our changing attitudes?

Greg Twitcher

Well I think it's probably down to the fact that our everyday lives have changed and I think what it is is that our lives are so busy and there are so many more options available to us now we just think, well why in the is day and age should I queue

Callum: Greg thinks that our attitudes are changing because our lives are changing. We are much busier in our lives now and we have more options to get the things we want. He uses the expression 'in this day and age', 'in this day and age'. 'Why in this day and age should I queue?' This expression means in this modern world with all its technology.

Listen again to Greg. He also goes on to mention what some of the other options are what things were like a few years ago.

Greg Twitcher

Well I think it's probably down to the fact that our everyday lives have changed and I think what it is is that our lives are so busy and there are so many more options available to us now we just think, well why in this day and age should I queue when I can go on the internet, I can go to 24 hour convenience stores and I am a little bit old enough to remember the fact when shops were closed on a Thursday afternoon and not open on a Sunday, so we have so many more choices now and we just say look I'm not going to put up with this and a lot of people are just walking out of shops.

Callum: These days we have access to internet shopping and there are a lot of 24 hour convenience stores. In the past many shops closed for one afternoon a week and most on Sundays. There were fewer convenience stores and no internet so if you wanted something and the shop was very busy, you just had to wait. But that has changed now. Many people will walk out of shops if they see a long queue.

Let's now hear from some Londoners and find out what they think about queuing, are they patient in queues?

VOICES

I get sick of it but I'm quite patient, but only if everybody else is patient, if people start pushing in front or trying to get to the front of the queue then that makes me lose my patience.

I've never abandoned a queue. I always stick around and wait.

I tend to get really impatient and I will just leave it

I try to be patient but generally find myself getting irritable the longer I have to stand around

I think it depends what time of the day it is. It it's early in the morning or if it's lunch time and I'm in the middle of work I wish the queue would be shorter, but otherwise I'm usually quite patient.

Callum: Well there does seem to be a mostly patient attitude to queuing though it can depend on the time of day, how busy we are and what the other people in the queue are doing. Listen again.

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Callum: So, how patient are you at queuing? How long would you be prepared to wait in a queue? Well if you do have to queue up, I hope you have an mp3 player so you can listen to this programme to help pass the time.

That's all from this edition of London life.