

Statistical bulletin

Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: 21 December 2022 to 8 January 2023

Social insights on daily life and events, including the cost of living, working arrangements and well-being from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

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1 . Main points

The following information is for the latest survey period 21 December 2022 to 8 January 2023, based on adults in Great Britain.

- When asked about the important issues facing the UK today, the most commonly reported issues continue to be the cost of living (92%), the NHS (85%), the economy (75%), and climate change and the environment (58%).
- Around 9 in 10 (93%) adults reported their cost of living had increased compared with a year ago, while a lower percentage (71%) reported an increase in their cost of living compared with one month ago.
- Around half (53%) of adults reported that they were worried (very or somewhat) about keeping warm in their home this winter (60% in the previous period from 7 to 18 December 2022).
- Around one in five adults (21%) reported they were occasionally, hardly ever, or never able to keep comfortably warm in their home in the past two weeks (12% occasionally, 7% hardly ever, and 2% never).
- The most common actions reported by adults because of the rising cost of living were spending less on non-essentials (65%), and using less fuel, such as gas or electricity, in their homes (59%); these have increased since we first started asking about this at a similar point a year ago (15 December 2021 to 3 January 2022).
- In addition, around 4 in 10 adults have reported shopping around more (44%) and spending less on food shopping and essentials (41%); while this is still higher than around a year ago (32% and 25% respectively; 15 December 2021 to 3 January 2022), this continued a decrease from the period 22 November to 4 December 2022 (50% and 46% respectively).
- Around one in five (18%) adults reported their travel plans had been disrupted by rail strikes in the past two weeks.

2 . Important issues facing the UK

Estimates in this release are based on data collected between 21 December 2022 and 8 January 2023 (the “latest period”) and 7 and 18 December 2022 (the “previous period”). Analysis is based on adults in Great Britain.

In the latest period, we asked adults what they feel are important issues facing the UK today (Figure 1). The most commonly reported issues were the same as in the previous period:

- the cost of living (92%)
- the NHS (85%)
- the economy (75%)
- climate change and the environment (58%)

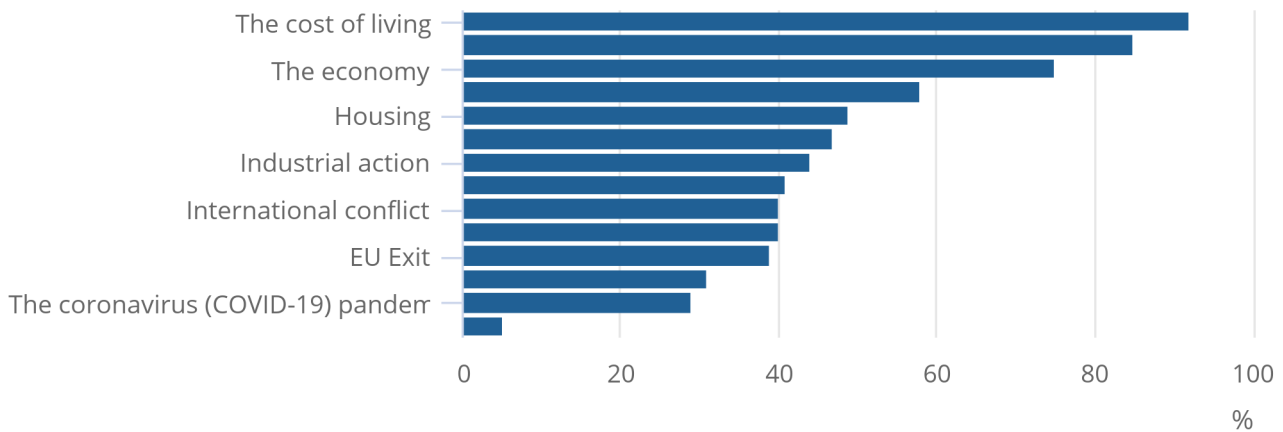
In the latest period, for the first time, we asked respondents whether industrial action was an important issue facing the UK today. Around four in nine (44%) adults reported this alongside other issues.

Figure 1: Around 9 in 10 (92%) adults reported the cost of living as an important issue facing the UK today

Proportion of all adults in Great Britain, 21 December 2022 to 8 January 2023

Figure 1: Around 9 in 10 (92%) adults reported the cost of living as an important issue facing the UK today

Proportion of all adults in Great Britain, 21 December 2022 to 8 January 2023



Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS) – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN)

Notes:

1. Question: "What do you think are important issues facing the UK today?"
2. Base: all adults.
3. Respondents were able to choose more than one option.

3 . Cost of living

Cost of living increases

In the latest period, we continued to ask adults about changes to their cost of living.

Around 9 in 10 (93%) reported their cost of living had increased compared with a year ago. Around 7 in 10 (71%) reported an increase in their cost of living compared with one month ago. This was an increase from 62% when we first asked about this in the period 3 to 14 November 2021.

Reasons for cost of living increases

The most commonly reported reasons given by adults for the rise in their cost of living over the past month remained the same as in the previous period and were increases in:

- the price of food shopping (95%)
- their gas or electricity bills (77%)
- the price of fuel (48%)

Actions taken because of this rising cost of living

The most common actions reported by all adults because of the rising cost of living in the latest period were spending less on non-essentials (65%) and using less fuel such as gas or electricity in their home (59%). This is similar to the previous period (67% and 56% respectively).

In the latest period, fewer adults have reported shopping around more (44%) and spending less on food shopping and essentials (41%) than in the early December period before Christmas (50% and 46% respectively; 22 November to 4 December 2022).

However, adults were still taking more actions in response to the rising cost of living than at a similar point a year ago. The proportion of adults reporting these actions remains far higher than during the period 15 December 2021 to 3 January 2022 (32% and 25% respectively) (Figure 2).

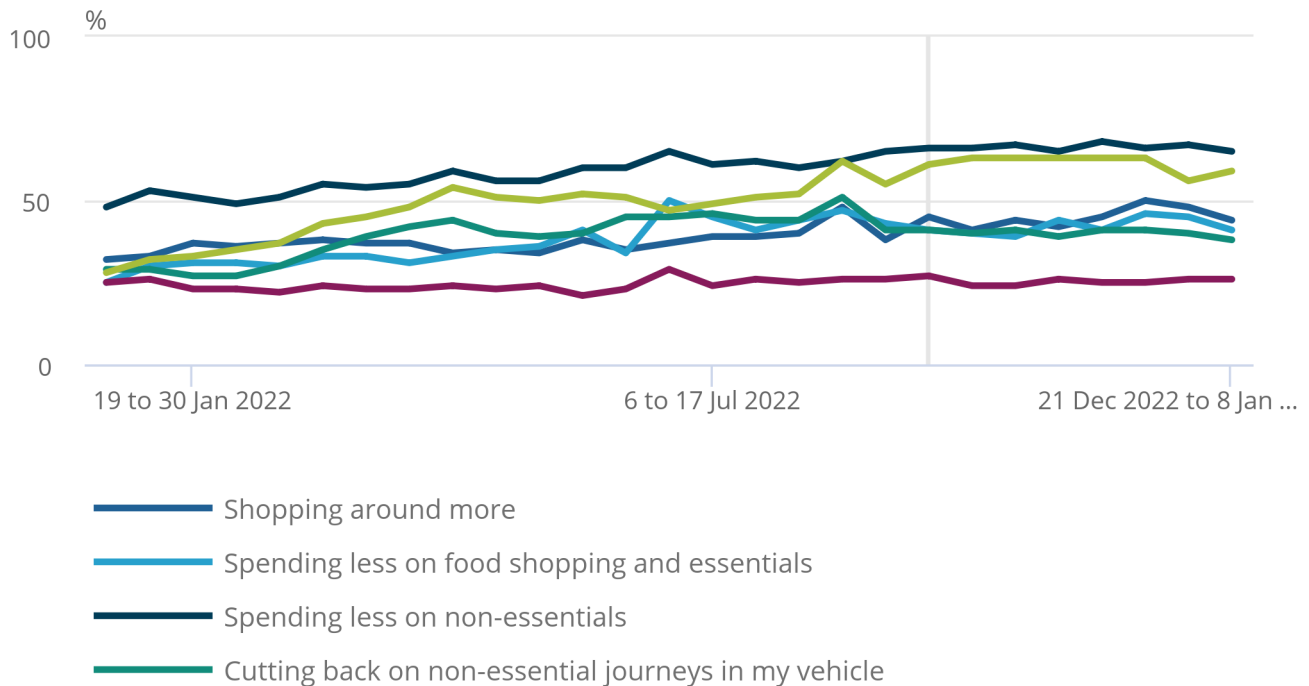
This is in line with the estimates we reported in our [previous publication](#), where around 6 in 10 (60%) adults reported they were planning on cutting back on the amount of money they spent this Christmas season compared with last year.

Figure 2: The proportion of people shopping around more and spending less on food shopping decreased through December but still increased overall in 2022

Proportion of adults taking actions because of increases in the cost of living, Great Britain, December 2021 to January 2023

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Proportion of adults taking actions because of increases in the cost of living, Great Britain, December 2021 to January 2023



Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS) – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN)

Notes:

1. Question: "Which of these, if any, are you doing because of the increases in the cost of living?".
2. Adults who said their cost of living has increased over the last month until the period 14 to 25 September 2022 from which the base is all adults.
3. Because of changes in the base of the question, there is a break in the data time series from the period 14 to 25 September 2022.
4. Respondents were able to choose more than one option.
5. Not all response options are included in this chart. Please see the datasets associated with this release for estimates for each option.

Other actions taken in response to the rising cost of living included around 1 in 25 (4%) adults reporting using support from charities including food banks, and around 3 in 10 (29%) adults reporting making energy efficiency improvements to their homes.

Household finances

In this part of the bulletin, we look at various aspects of people’s household finances.

In the latest period, around one in six (16%) adults reported that they did not have savings (18% in the previous period). Around 1 in 10 (8%, 7% in the previous period) adults reported that they had a direct debit, a standing order, or bill that they were unable to pay in the past month.

Energy bills

Around half (46%) of adults who pay energy bills said they found it very or somewhat difficult to afford them in the latest period (47% in the previous period).

Among those who reported they have gas or electricity supplied to their home, around 1 in 20 (6%, 4% in the previous period) reported they were behind on their bills.

There are strong seasonal spending patterns relating to gas and electricity that may affect these results. For more information on this and recent price rises for gas and electricity, please see our latest [Consumer price inflation, UK: November 2022](#) data.

Our 5 January 2023 article [Census 2021: how homes are heated in your area](#) provides further insights on how homes are heated across England and Wales and how this affects both energy costs and what financial support is available.

Rent or mortgage payments

Around 3 in 10 (29%) adults who are currently making rent or mortgage payments reported that these payments have gone up in the last six months (29% in the previous period).

Around 3 in 10 (28%) of those who are currently making rent or mortgage payments reported that they are finding it very or somewhat difficult to afford these payments (31% in the previous period).

Around 2% of those currently making rent or mortgage payments reported they were behind with these payments (4% in the previous period).

Our 9 January 2023 release [How increases in housing costs impact households](#) looks at how increasing interest rates and rental costs will impact mortgage holders and renters in 2023.

4 . Worries, personal well-being and loneliness

Keeping warm this winter

In this period, we asked adults how worried they were about keeping warm in their home this winter:

- around half (53%) reported being very or somewhat worried (60% in the previous period)
- around a quarter (23%) reported being neither worried nor unworried (18% in the previous period)
- around one in five (22%) reported being somewhat unworried or not at all worried (19% in the previous period)

Overall, worry about keeping warm appears to have decreased in the latest period, the higher level of worry during the previous period may have been because of [cold weather alerts](#).

Around one in five adults (21%) reported they were occasionally, hardly ever, or never able to keep comfortably warm in their home in the past two weeks (12% occasionally, 7% hardly ever, and 2% never). This is compared with 15% occasionally, 8% hardly ever, and 1% never in the previous period.

Worry about cost of living

Around three-quarters (74%) of adults reported being worried (very or somewhat) about rising costs of living in the past two weeks (75% in the previous period).

Personal well-being

This period, we continued to ask respondents about their personal well-being. Average levels of personal well-being were:

- life satisfaction: 6.9 in the latest period (6.9 in the previous period)
- feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile: 7.2 in the latest period (7.3 in the previous period)
- happiness: 6.9 in the latest period (7.1 in the previous period)
- anxiety: 3.9 in the latest period (3.9 in the previous period)

Our [Personal well-being quarterly estimates technical report](#) provides more information on the seasonal variation associated with measures of personal well-being. You can learn more about the Measures of National Well-being from our [Quality of life in the UK: November 2022 bulletin](#) and [Measures of National Well-being dashboard](#).

Figure 3: Levels of personal well-being

Adults in Great Britain, March 2020 to January 2023

Notes:

1. Questions included: "Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?", "Overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are worthwhile?", "Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?", and "Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?".
2. These questions are answered on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is "not at all" and 10 is "completely".
3. Base: all adults.

Download the data

[.xlsx](#)

Loneliness

Around a quarter (27%) of adults reported feeling lonely always, often, or some of the time in the latest period (22% in the previous period). This is similar to the proportion who reported this in the period 22 November to 4 December 2022 (26%).

For further estimates on people's personal well-being and loneliness, including breakdowns by age, sex and trends over time, please see our [Personal well-being and loneliness dataset](#).

5 . Working arrangements

Location of work

Usual work and work location patterns may have been affected by Christmas and New Year holidays during this survey period.

Around half (49%) of working adults travelled to work at some point in the past seven days (70% in the previous period). This includes:

- 36% who only travelled to work in the past seven days (47% in the previous period)
- 13% who reported both working from home and travelling to work (hybrid working) in the past seven days (24% in the previous period)

Around 15% of working adults said they worked from home exclusively in the past seven days (15% in the previous period). A further 35% neither travelled to work nor worked from home (15% in the previous period).

Rail strikes

In the latest period, we asked adults about the impact of rail strikes. Around one in five (18%) said their travel plans had been disrupted by rail strikes in the past two weeks. This compared with 11% reporting this the last time we asked the same question (31 August to 11 September 2022).

Among those who reported that rail strikes had disrupted their travel plans, around half (49%) said this disruption affected their ability to take part in leisure activities. In addition, around a quarter (27%) reported they had spent more on travel as a result of the strikes.

However, fewer adults reported that the strikes had caused disruption to their ability to attend school, college or university (6%) or their ability to work (5%).

These effects may have been influenced by Christmas and New Year holidays during this survey period.

6 . Actions taken to reduce the spread of illness

In the latest period, around a quarter of adults (24%) avoided contact with older people or other vulnerable people because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic or other illnesses such as coughs and colds in the past seven days. This is an increase from 16% when we last asked this (8 to 20 November 2022).

Similarly, in the latest period there was an increase in the proportion of adults who reported taking a rapid lateral flow test in the past seven days (15%), compared with 10% last time we asked.

Further estimates regarding the actions taken to reduce the spread and the social impacts of illnesses (including coronavirus (COVID-19) and other illnesses such as coughs, colds and flu), with trends over time and breakdowns by age and sex, can be found in our [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) and other illnesses dataset](#).

More about coronavirus

- Find the latest on [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) in the UK](#).
- [Explore the latest coronavirus data](#) from the ONS and other sources.
- View [all coronavirus data](#).

7 . Public opinions and social trends data

[Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: household finances](#)

Dataset | Released 13 January 2023

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) of people's experiences of changes in their cost of living and household finances in Great Britain.

[Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: personal well-being and loneliness](#)

Dataset | Released 13 January 2023

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) of worries, personal well-being and loneliness in Great Britain.

[Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: working arrangements](#)

Dataset | Released 13 January 2023

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) related to the working arrangements of people in Great Britain.

[Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: personal experiences of shortages of goods](#)

Dataset | Released 13 January 2023

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) of whether people experienced shortages of goods such as food, medicine, or fuel when shopping in Great Britain.

[Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: coronavirus \(COVID-19\) and other illnesses](#)

Dataset | Released 13 January 2023

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) related to the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and other illnesses on people, households and communities in Great Britain.

[Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: travel to work and rail disruptions](#)

Dataset | Released 13 January 2023

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) of travel to work methods and travel disruptions in Great Britain.

8 . Measuring the data

This release contains data and indicators from a module being undertaken through the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

Breakdowns by age and sex, including [confidence intervals](#) for the estimates, are contained in our [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain datasets](#).

Where changes in results from previous weeks are presented in this bulletin or comparisons between estimates are made, associated confidence intervals should be used to assess the [statistical significance](#) of the differences.

Sampling and weighting

In the latest period (21 December 2022 to 8 January 2023), we sampled 4,988 households. This sample was randomly selected from those who had previously completed the Labour Market Survey (LMS) or OPN. The responding sample for the latest period contained 2,742 individuals, representing a 55% response rate.

Survey weights were applied to make estimates representative of the population (based on ONS population estimates). Further information on the survey design and quality can be found in our [Opinions and Lifestyle Survey Quality and Methodology Information \(QMI\)](#).

9 . Related links

[The impact of winter pressures on adults in Great Britain: December 2022](#)

Article | Released 15 December 2022

First insights from our new winter survey providing monthly updates on how increases in the cost of living and difficulty accessing NHS services are impacting people's lives during the autumn and winter months.

[Cost of living insights](#)

Web page | Updated frequently

A live roundup of the latest data and trends about the cost of living. Explore changes to the cost of everyday items and how this is affecting people.

[Impact of increased cost of living on adults across Great Britain: June to September 2022](#)

Article | Released 25 October 2022

Analysis of the proportion of the population that is affected by an increase in their cost of living, and of the characteristics associated with having difficulty affording or being behind on energy, mortgage or rental payments, using data from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey.

[How increases in housing costs impact households](#)

Article | Released 9 January 2023

How increases in mortgage interest rates during 2022 are likely to make borrowing more expensive for those with fixed rates deals coming to an end in 2023.

[Census 2021: how homes are heated in your area](#)

Article | Released 5 January 2023

As more than half of adults report worry about keeping warm this winter, we explore how homes are heated across England and Wales.

[Cost of living and depression in adults, Great Britain: 29 September to 23 October 2022](#)

Article | Released 6 December 2022

Analysis into the prevalence of depression among adults in Great Britain in autumn 2022, exploring this in the context of the rising cost of living.

[Quality of life in the UK: November 2022](#)

Bulletin | Released 11 November 2022

An update on the UK's progress across 10 domains of national well-being: personal well-being, relationships, health, what we do, where we live, personal finance, economy, education and skills, governance, and the environment.

[COVID-19 question bank](#)

Web page | Updated frequently

Government Statistical Service page that provides a bank of questions from multiple Office for National Statistics (ONS) surveys related to coronavirus (COVID-19) to be used in other surveys to further support harmonisation and questionnaire development. This bank also provides users with an understanding of what data the ONS has in relation to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

10 . Cite this statistical bulletin

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