

Statistical bulletin

Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: 27 April to 8 May 2022

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

Contact:

Catarina Figueira, Caleb Ogwuru, 13 May 2022

David Ainslie and Tim Vizard

policy.evidence.analysis@ons.gov.uk

gov.uk

+44 300 0671543

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Notice

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This bulletin was previously published in the Coronavirus section of the website. It has a new title and page location from 29 April 2022 onwards. It will continue to present indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey of the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, along with other insights into daily life and events, including health and well-being, cost of living and goods shortages. All previous versions of the bulletin can be found on the [Coronavirus and the Social impacts on Great Britain previous releases](#) page.

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1 . Main points

In the latest period, 27 April to 8 May 2022, based on adults in Great Britain:

- around 1 in 20 (6%) adults reported feeling lonely always or often in the latest period (5% in the previous period); this increased to around a quarter of adults (25%) who reported feeling lonely always, often or some of the time (23% in the previous period).
- around one in three (34%) adults experienced high levels of anxiety; this proportion was slightly higher among younger adults aged 16 to 29 years (42%) and women (37%).
- Around 9 in 10 (88%) adults reported their cost of living had risen over the past month (91% in the previous period; 13 to 24 April 2022); when we first started asking this question in the period 3 to 14 November 2021, this proportion was 62%.
- the most common reasons given by adults who reported their cost of living had increased in the latest period were an increase in the price of food shopping (92%), an increase in gas or electricity bills (85%), and an increase in the price of fuel (79%).
- of these reasons, almost 6 in 10 (58%) reported they were most worried about an increase in gas and electricity bills.
- around 4 in 10 (41%) adults reported that in the past two weeks they were buying less food when food shopping (39% in the previous period) with 38% of adults reporting they had to spend more than usual to get what they normally buy (44% in the previous period).
- around 4 in 10 (43%) adults reported they were very or somewhat worried about the effect of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on their lives right now (39% in the previous period).

2 . Personal well-being and loneliness

Estimates in this release are based on data collected between 27 April and 8 May, (the "latest period") and 13 and 24 April 2022 (the "previous period").

Further demographic breakdowns of these and other estimates in this bulletin are available within the accompanying [Public opinions and social trends datasets](#).

With this week being [Mental Health Awareness Week](#), we have taken a look at the proportion of people in Great Britain who experience poor levels of some aspects of well-being in the latest period.

Anxiety

Around one in three (34%) of adults experienced high levels of anxiety, that is they reported an anxiety level of 6 out of 10 or more (32% in the previous period).

Larger proportions of younger adults reported high anxiety in the latest period; 42% among those aged 16 to 29 years; 34% among those aged 30 to 49 years, 31% among those aged 50 to 69 years and 30% among those aged 70 years and above.

A slightly higher proportion of women (37%) reported experiencing high levels of anxiety than men (31%).

Loneliness

Around 1 in 20 (6%) of adults reported feeling lonely always or often in the latest period (5% in the previous period).

This increased to around a quarter of adults (25%) reporting feeling lonely always, often or some of the time in the latest period (23% in the previous period).

This proportion appears to vary slightly by age, with 26% of those aged 16 to 29 years, 30% of those aged 30 to 49 years, 23% of those aged 50 to 69 years and 19% of those aged 70 years and above reporting feeling lonely always, often or some of the time in the latest period.

Personal well-being

Average levels of personal well-being were:

- life satisfaction — 7.0 in the latest period and the previous period
- feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile — 7.3 in the latest period and 7.2 in the previous period
- happiness — 7.1 in the latest period and 7.2 in the previous period
- anxiety — 4.0 in the latest period and 3.9 in the previous period

These estimates of personal well-being may differ from those in our [Personal well-being in the UK, quarterly: April 2011 to September 2021](#), based on the Annual Population Survey. To find out more about the difference between these two data sources, you can view our [data collection changes due to the pandemic and their impact on estimating personal well-being methodology](#).

Figure 1: Levels of personal well-being remained relatively stable

Adults in Great Britain, March 2020 to May 2022

Notes:

1. Questions: "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.
4. Changes were made to the OPN design from 30 March 2022, which resulted in small changes to the responding sample. We therefore advise caution with comparing estimates provided for periods from 30 March 2022 with estimates for earlier periods.

Download the data

[.xlsx](#)

3 . Household finances and cost of living

We continued to ask adults about changes in their cost of living over the last month, with around 9 in 10 (88%) reporting it had increased in the latest period (91% in the previous period). The proportion of adults reporting this has increased since we first started asking this question in November 2021, when 62% of adults reported this (3 to 14 November 2021).

Since November 2021, the proportion of adults who think they would not be able to save any money in the next 12 months has gradually increased; 43% in the latest period compared with 34% in November 2021.

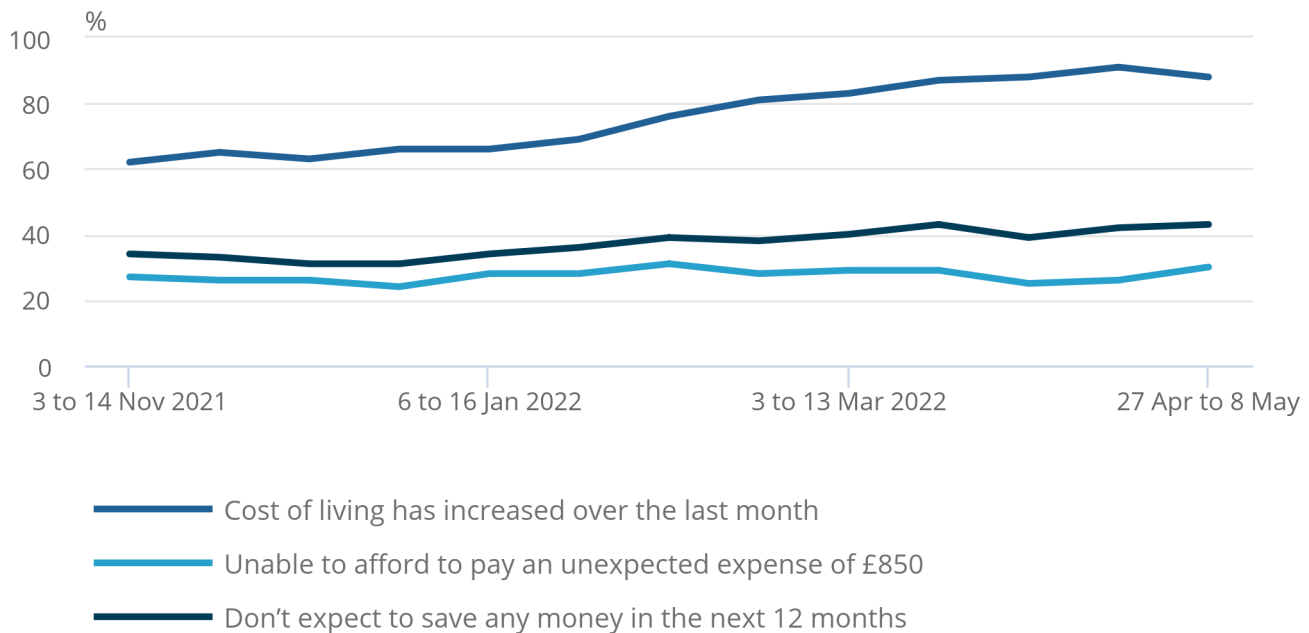
The percentage who reported their household could not afford to pay an unexpected, but necessary, expense of £850 has been more stable; 30% in the latest period, compared with 27% in November 2021 (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Around 9 in 10 adults reported an increased cost of living in the past month

All adults in Great Britain, November 2021 to May 2022

Figure 2: Around 9 in 10 adults reported an increased cost of living in the past month

All adults in Great Britain, November 2021 to May 2022



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

Notes:

1. Questions: “Could your household afford to pay an unexpected, but necessary, expense of £850?”, “In view of the general economic situation, do you think you will be able to save any money in the next 12 months?”, and “Over the last month, has your cost of living changed?”.
2. “Unable to afford to pay an unexpected expense of £850” refers to the proportion of people who answered “No” to “Could your household afford to pay an unexpected, but necessary, expense of £850?”.
3. “Don’t expect to save any money in the next 12 months” refers to the proportion of respondents who answered “No” to “In view of the general economic situation, do you think you will be able to save any money in the next 12 months?”.
4. Changes were made to the OPN design from 30 March 2022, which resulted in small changes to the responding sample. We therefore advise caution when comparing estimates provided for periods from 30 March 2022 with estimates for earlier periods.

The most common reasons reported by adults who said their cost of living had increased in the latest period were:

- an increase in the price of food shopping (92%, same as in the previous period)
- an increase in gas or electricity bills (85% compared with 86% in the previous period)
- an increase in the price of fuel (79% compared with 80% in the previous period)

Worry about cost of living

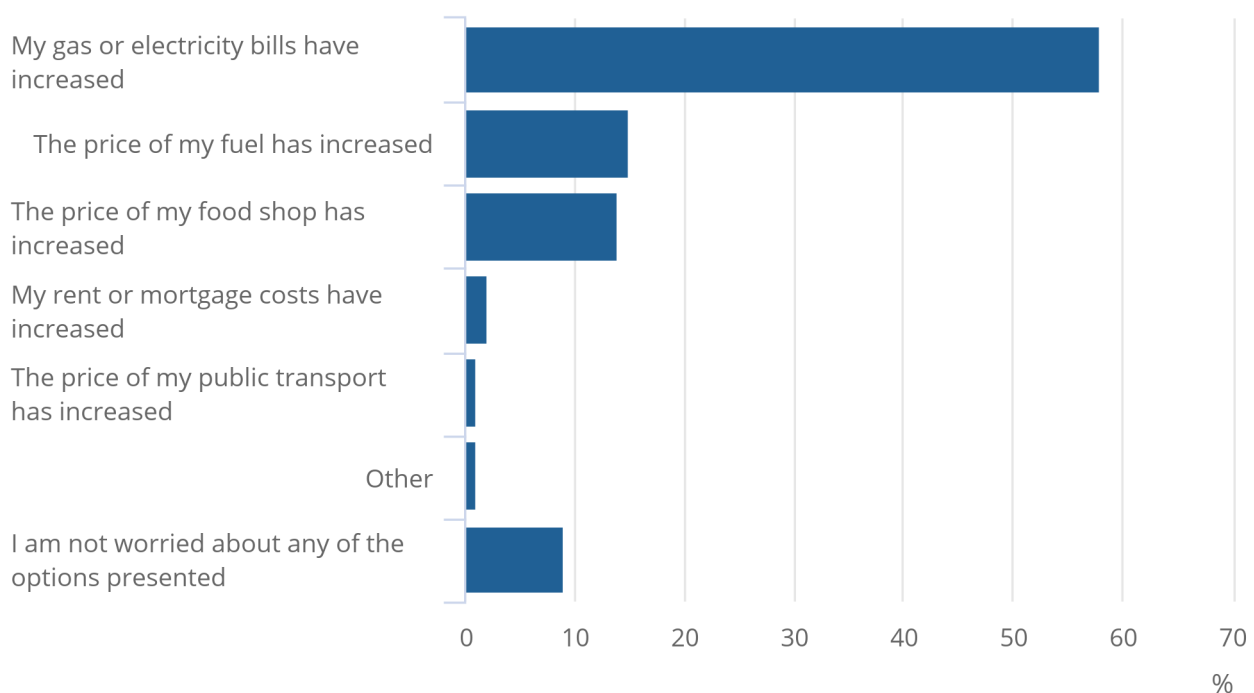
This week for the first time, we asked respondents who reported their cost of living had increased which of the reasons for this rise they were most worried about. Almost 6 in 10 (58%) reported being most worried about an increase in gas and electricity bills (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Around 6 in 10 adults who reported their cost of living had increased were most worried about an increase in their gas and electricity bills

Adults in Great Britain who reported their cost of living had increased, 27 April to 8 May 2022

Figure 3: Around 6 in 10 adults who reported their cost of living had increased were most worried about an increase in their gas and electricity bills

Adults in Great Britain who reported their cost of living had increased, 27 April to 8 May 2022



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

Notes:

1. Questions: “Over the last month, for what reasons has your cost of living increased?”, and “Of these, which are you most worried about?”.
2. Base: adults who reported their cost of living had increased over the last month.

Actions following cost of living increases

The most common actions reported by adults who reported their cost of living had increased were:

- spending less on non-essentials (56% compared with 59% in the last period)
- using less fuel such as gas or electricity at home (51% compared with 54% in the last period)
- cutting back on non-essential journeys in a vehicle (40% compared with 44% in the last period)
- shopping around more (35% compared with 34% in the last period)

Just over 4 in 10 (41%) of all adults reported that in the past two weeks they were buying less food when food shopping. This proportion appears to be growing, having been 39% in the previous period and 18% at the beginning of 2022.

Around 4 in 10 (38%) of all adults reported they had to spend more than usual to get what they normally buy (44% in the previous period; 19% at the beginning of 2022).

Paying energy bills

Among those who pay energy bills, 4 in 10 (41%) reported they found it very or somewhat difficult to afford them (40% in the previous period). In comparison, around half (49%) reported it was very or somewhat easy to afford their energy bills (51% in the previous period).

Among those who reported they have gas or electricity supplied to their home, 4% reported they were behind on these bills (3% in the previous period).

These data were collected between 27 April and 8 May 2022, a period in which people may have experienced the impact of the increase in the [domestic energy tariff cap on 1 April 2022](#).

There are strong seasonal spending patterns relating to gas and electricity that may affect the results presented in this section. For more information on this and recent price rises for gas and electricity, please see [our latest Consumer price inflation bulletin](#) for March 2022.

4 . Shortages of goods

In this period, we continued to ask adults whether they had experienced shortages of any goods at any time in the past two weeks:

- around 1 in 10 (11%) of adults reported being unable to buy fuel in the previous two weeks, a decrease from 20% in the previous period but remaining higher than at the start of 2022 (3% in the period 6 to 16 January 2022)
- 1 in 20 (5%) of adults reported being unable to buy medicine (3% in the previous period, 5% at the beginning of 2022)
- around one in seven (14%) reported being unable to buy essential food (12% previous period, 16% at the beginning of 2022)
- just over 2 in 10 (23%) reported being unable to buy other non-essential food (21% in the previous period, 20% at the beginning of 2022)

5 . Preventative measures against coronavirus (COVID-19) and other illnesses

This section provides the latest estimates of preventative measures used by adults in Great Britain to live with and manage the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic as well as other illnesses.

From the period 30 March to 10 April 2022, changes were made to the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) to enable us to provide ongoing indicators on a wide range of public opinion and societal issues.

These include changes to question wording, response options and routing. Because of these changes, estimates provided for periods from the 30 March to 10 April 2022 are not directly comparable with estimates for periods prior to this.

Worries about coronavirus (COVID-19)

Around two in five (43%) adults reported they were very or somewhat worried about the effect of the coronavirus pandemic on their lives right now. This is a slight increase from 39% in the previous period.

Face coverings

In the latest period, 57% of adults reported they wore a face covering when outside their home in the past seven days (66% in the previous period). Of adults who reported wearing a face covering, 68% reported doing so often or always.

Among adults who used public transport, 41% reported they wore a face covering for their whole journey in the past seven days (49% in the previous period).

Social distancing

Nearly 4 in 10 (39%) adults reported they always or often maintained social distancing when outside their home in the past seven days (38% in the previous period).

Lateral flow testing

Among adults, just over 2 in 10 (23%) reported they had taken a rapid lateral flow test in the past seven days (34% in the previous period).

Almost 9 in 10 (89%) adults reported they were very or fairly likely to be tested if they had COVID-19 symptoms in the latest period, same as in previous period.

These data were collected between 27 April and 8 May 2022. From April 1, the [UK government is no longer providing free universal testing for the general public in England](#). There is also [different guidance around testing in Wales](#) and also [different guidance in Scotland](#).

Staying at home

Around 1 in 50 (2%) of adults reported staying at home because they did not want to spread COVID-19 in the past seven days (3% in the previous period).

Location of work

7 in 10 (70%) working adults travelled to work at some point the past seven days (65% in the previous period).

This comprised 46% of working adults who only travelled to work (45% in the previous period) and 24% of adults who both worked from home and travelled to work (21% in the previous period).

14% of working adults said they worked from home exclusively in the past seven days (15% in the previous period).

16% neither travelled to work or worked from home (19% in the previous period). Reasons for working adults neither working from home nor travelling to work in the past seven days might include being on annual or sick leave.

6 . Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain data

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

Dataset | Released 13 May 2022

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: personal experiences of shortages of goods](#)

Dataset | Released on 13 May 2022

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: Household finances](#)

Dataset | Released on 13 May 2022

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 on 13 May 2022

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

7 . 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).

From the period 30 March to 10 April 2022, changes were made to the OPN to enable us to provide ongoing indicators on a wide range of public opinion and societal issues.

Changes were made to the OPN survey design, for example, sample size, the questionnaire, and financial incentives to participate. These changes may result in small changes to the responding sample. We therefore advise caution with comparing estimates from this period onwards with those published prior to this period.

Breakdowns by age and sex, including [confidence intervals](#) for the estimates, are contained in the [Public opinion and social trends, Great Britain datasets](#). Breakdowns by region are no longer provided within these datasets because of the smaller responding sample size of the OPN survey.

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

Sampling and weighting

In the latest period (27 April to 8 May 2022), we sampled 4,976 households. This sample was randomly selected from those that had previously completed the Labour Market Survey (LMS) or OPN. The responding sample for the latest period contained 2,309 individuals, representing a 46.4% response rate.

Survey weights were applied to make estimates representative of the population (based on June 2021 population estimates). Further information on the survey design and quality can be found in our [Opinions and Lifestyle Survey Quality and Methodology Information \(QMI\)](#).

8 . Related links

[Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain](#)

Bulletin | Released 1 April 2022

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (covering 16 to 27 March 2022) of the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on people, households and communities in Great Britain.

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) latest insights](#)

Web page | Updated as data become available

An interactive tool to explore the latest data and trends about the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and other sources.

[Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators](#)

Bulletin | Released weekly

Early experimental data and analysis on economic activity and social change in the UK. These faster indicators are created using rapid response surveys, novel data sources, and experimental methods.

[The rising cost of living and its impact on individuals in Great Britain: November 2021 to March 2022](#)

Article | Released 25 April 2022

Analysis of how different groups in the population have been affected by an increase in their cost of living, using data from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey.

[Homeworking and spending during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic, Great Britain: April 2020 to January 2022](#)

Article | Released 14 February 2022

Analysis of how working from home has affected individuals' spending, how this differs by characteristics, and how consumer spending has been affected.

[COVID-19 Question Bank](#)

Web page | Updated frequently

Government Statistical Service page that provides a bank of questions from multiple ONS surveys related to 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 Office for National Statistics (ONS) have in relation to the coronavirus pandemic.