Office for National Statistics

Statistical bulletin

Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: 30 March to 24 April 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).

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Notice

29 April 2022

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, 13 to 24 April 2022, based on adults in Great Britain:

- around 9 in 10 (91%) adults reported their cost of living had risen (88% in the previous period; 30 March to 10 April 2022), continuing the increase since we first started asking this question in the period 3 to 14 November 2021, when this was 62%.

- 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%), an increase in gas or electricity bills (86%), and an increase in the price of fuel (80%).

- among those who pay energy bills, 4 in 10 (40%) said they found it very or somewhat difficult to afford their energy bills (37% in the previous period).

- around 4 in 10 (39%) adults reported that in the past two weeks they were buying less food when food shopping (34% in the previous period) with 44% of adults reporting they had to spend more than usual to get what they normally buy (37% in the previous period).

- when asked whether they had experienced shortages of goods in the past two weeks, around 2 in 10 (21%) reported being unable to buy non-essential food (17% in the previous period).

- around two in five (39%) adults reported they were very or somewhat worried about the effect of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on their lives right now.

From the 30 March 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. Changes were made to the OPN survey design from this period, which resulted in small changes to the responding sample.

We therefore advise caution with comparing the estimates provided in this release with those published in previous releases.

2 . Household finances and cost of living

Estimates in this release are based on data collected between 13 and 24 April 2022, (the “latest period") and 30 March and 10 April 2022 (the “previous period").

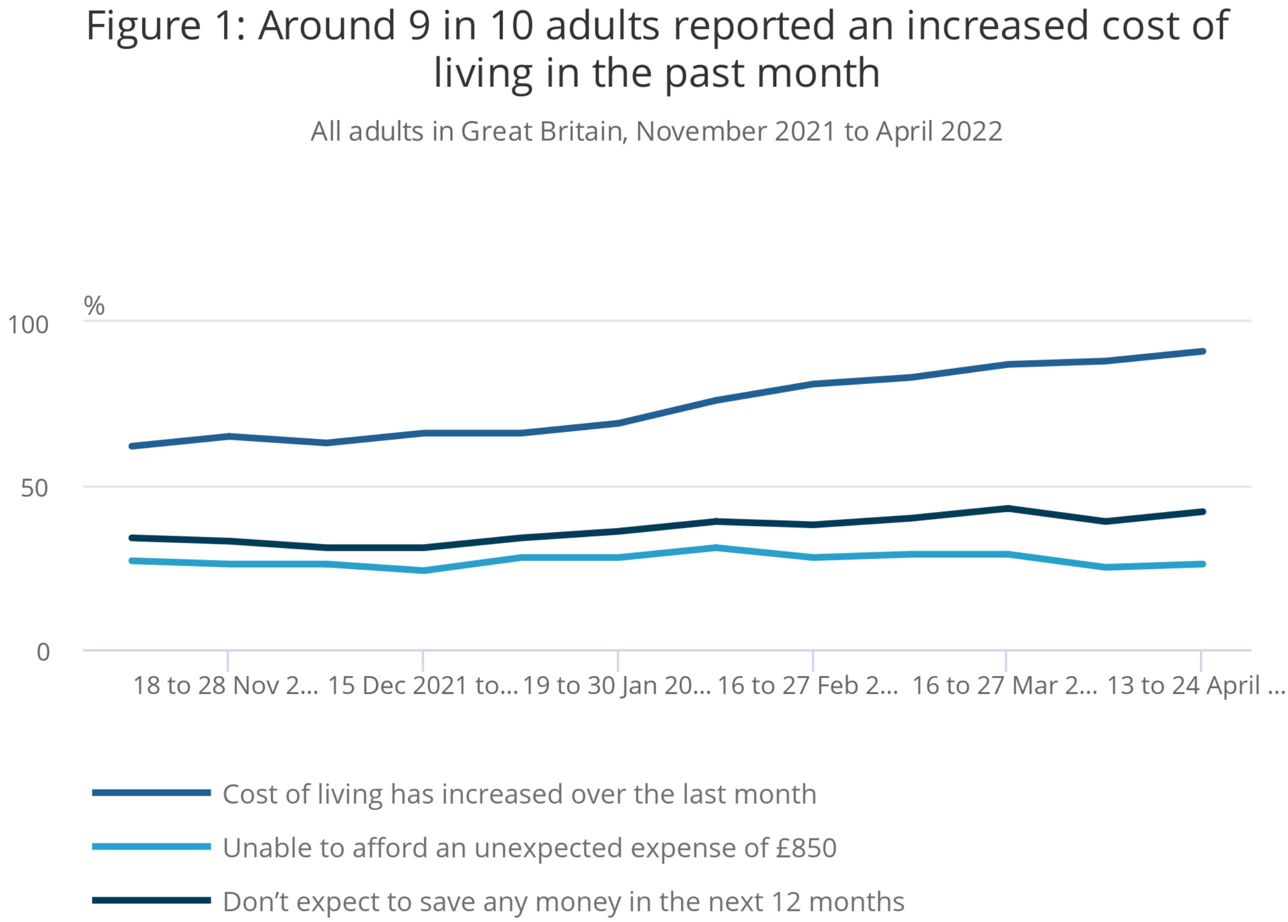
We continued to ask adults about changes in their cost of living over the last month, with 91% reporting it had increased in the latest period, compared with 88% in the previous period. The proportion of adults reporting this has gradually increased since we first started asking this question in November 2021, when 62% of adults reported this (3 to 14 November 2021). People's experiences of cost of living increases may have been affected by the recent increase to the energy price cap from 1 April 2022.

Looking at this by age group, the proportion of adults reporting an increase in their cost of living in the latest period was lowest among those aged 16 to 29 (81%). This proportion was higher among all other age groups (93% among those aged 30 to 49 years, 94% among those aged 50 to 69 years and 91% among those aged 70 years and over).

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; 42% 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; 26% in the latest period, compared with 27% in November 2021 (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Around 9 in 10 adults reported an increased cost of living in the past month

All adults in Great Britain, November 2021 to April 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 12 months, 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% compared with 90% in the previous period)
- an increase in gas or electricity bills (86% compared with 80% in the previous period)
- an increase in the price of fuel (80% compared with 78% in the previous period)

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

- spending less on non-essentials (59%)
- using less fuel such as gas or electricity at home (54%)
- cutting back on non-essential journeys in my vehicle (44%)
- shopping around more (34%)

Paying energy bills

Among those who pay energy bills, 4 in 10 (40%) said they found it very or somewhat difficult to afford them (37% in the previous period). In comparison, around half (51%) reported it was very or somewhat easy to afford their energy bills (52% in the previous period).

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

These data were collected between 30 March and 24 April 2022, a period during which there was an 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.

Further demographic breakdowns of estimates in this bulletin are available within the accompanying Public opinions and social trends datasets.

3 . Experience of shortage 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:

- one in five (20%) adults reported being unable to buy fuel in the previous two weeks, an increase from 8% in the previous period and from around 3% at the beginning of 2022 (6 to 16 January 2022)
- less than 1 in 20 (3%) of adults reported being unable to buy medicine (3% in the previous period, 5% at the beginning of 2022)
- Around 1 in 10 (12%) reported being unable to buy essential food (12% previous period, 16% at the beginning of 2022)
- Around 2 in 10 (21%) reported being unable to buy other non-essential food (17% in the previous period, 20% at the beginning of 2022)

Around 4 in 10 (39%) adults reported that in the past two weeks they were buying less food when food shopping. This proportion appears to be growing, having been 34% in the previous period and 18% at the beginning of 2022. Over 4 in 10 (44%) adults said they had to spend more than usual to get what they normally buy (37% in the previous period; 19% at the beginning of 2022).

4 . Personal well-being

Levels of personal well-being were:

- life satisfaction (7.0 in the latest period and 6.9 in the previous period)
- feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile (7.2 in the latest period and the previous period)
- happiness (7.2 in the latest period and 6.9 in the previous period)
- anxiety (3.9 in the latest period and 4.1 in the previous period)

Our previous research on personal well-being has shown seasonal variation in levels of personal well-being during the period around Easter. This may have had an impact on well-being levels in this release.

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 2: Levels of personal well-being remained relatively stable

Adults in Great Britain, March 2020 to April 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".
2. Base: all adults.
3. 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

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.

Survey questions regarding the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and preventative measures taken as a result were broadened to cover other illnesses.

These include changes to question wording, response options and routing. Because of these changes, the estimates provided in this section for the latest and previous period are not directly comparable with estimates for periods prior to this.

Worries about coronavirus (COVID-19)

Around two in five (39%) adults reported they were very or somewhat worried about the effect of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on their lives right now. This is a decrease from 48% in the previous period.

Face coverings

In the latest period, 65% of adults reported they wore a face covering when outside their home in the past seven days (this question was not asked in the previous period). Among adults who used public transport, 49% said they wore a face covering for their whole journey in the past seven days; this is similar to 48% in the previous period.

Social distancing

Nearly 4 in 10 (38%) adults reported they always or often maintained social distancing when outside their home in the past seven days (42% in the previous period).

Lateral flow testing

Among adults, more than 3 in 10 (34%) reported they had taken a rapid lateral flow test in the past seven days, compared with 43% in the previous period. Almost 9 in 10 (89%) adults said they were very or fairly likely to be tested if they had COVID-19 symptoms in the latest period.

These data were collected between 30 March and 24 April 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

A lower percentage (3%) of adults reported staying at home because they did not want to spread COVID-19 in the past seven days (6% in the previous period).

The main reasons these adults reported for staying at home in the latest period were:

- they had tested positive for COVID-19 (85%)
- they had been unwell and didn't want to spread it to others (68%)
- they had COVID-19 symptoms (45%)
- they had been in contact with someone who had tested positive for COVID-19 (18%)

6 . Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain data

Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: coronavirus (COVID-19) and other illnesses
Dataset | Released 29 April 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 29 April 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 29 April 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 29 April 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 (13 to 24 April 2022), we sampled 4,978 households. In the previous period (30 March to 10 April 2022), we sampled 4,962 households. These samples were randomly selected from those that had previously completed the Labour Market Survey (LMS) or OPN.

The responding sample for the latest period contained 2,310 individuals, representing a 46.4% response rate. The responding sample for the previous period contained 2,480 individuals, representing a 50.0% response rate. This is a reduction compared with previous response rates of around 70.0%, partly owing to the removal of financial incentives awarded for responding to the OPN survey.

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.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey, UK
Bulletin | Released weekly
Estimates for England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. This survey is being delivered in partnership with University of Oxford, University of Manchester, UK Health Security Agency and Wellcome Trust. This study is jointly led by the ONS and the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) working with the University of Oxford and Lighthouse Laboratory to collect and test samples.

The higher cost of living and its impact on individuals in Great Britain: November 2021 to April 2022
Article | Released 25 April 2022
Analysis of how different groups of the population have been impacted by an increase in their cost of living, using data from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey, characteristics of people testing positive for COVID-19, UK: 13 April 2022
Bulletin | Released 13 April 2022
Characteristics of people testing positive for COVID-19 from the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey. This survey is being delivered in partnership with University of Oxford, University of Manchester, UK Health Security Agency and Wellcome Trust. This study is jointly led by the ONS and the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) working with the University of Oxford and Lighthouse Laboratory to collect and test samples.

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.