

Statistical bulletin

Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: February 2025

Social insights on daily life and events, including experiences of the cost of living, as well as attitudes to important issues from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

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Release date:
21 March 2025

Next release:
17 April 2025

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1 . Main points

The following information is from data collected from 5 February to 2 March 2025, based on adults in Great Britain.

- When asked about the important issues facing the UK today, the most-commonly reported issues were the NHS (87%), the cost of living (86%), the economy (70%), crime (63%), immigration (58%), housing (56%) and climate change and the environment (55%).

Other questions included experiences of the cost of living, energy bills and keeping comfortably warm at home.

- Around 6 in 10 adults (59%) reported that their cost of living had increased in the last month; this proportion has been increasing since 5 to 28 July 2024, when 45% of adults reported this.
- Adults aged 70 years and over were most likely to report an increase in their cost of living in the last month (68%) compared with any other age group (52% of those aged 16 to 29 years; 59% of those aged 30 to 49 years; 60% of those aged 50 to 69 years).
- Around 1 in 5 (21%) adults reported they were borrowing more money or using more credit in the last month compared with a year ago; those aged 30 to 49 years were more likely to report this (30%) when compared with any other age group (18% of those aged 16 to 29 years; 20% of those aged 50 to 69 years and 10% for those aged over 70 years).
- In the last month, 5% of adults reported they had not been able to pay a direct debit, standing order, or household bill; those aged 30 to 49 years were more likely to report this (7%) than those aged 70 years and over (1%).
- Over 1 in 3 (36%) adults paying energy bills found it very or somewhat difficult to afford their bills; a slight decrease from a similar period a year ago (41% between 14 and 25 February 2024).
- Around 1 in 6 (15%) adults reported that they were occasionally, hardly ever or never able to stay warm at home; this is similar to last year's figure (17% in the period 14 to 25 February 2024).

2 . Important issues facing the UK

In the latest period (5 February to 2 March 2025), the NHS (87%) and the cost of living (86%) remain the two most-reported important issues facing the UK (Figure 1). While the proportion of all adults reporting the NHS as an important issue has generally remained stable since October 2022 (82%), the proportion of all adults reporting the cost of living has gradually decreased over the same period (93% in October 2022).

The proportions of all adults reporting the economy (70%), and climate change and the environment (55%) as important issues facing the UK have also gradually decreased since October 2022, when these proportions were 79% and 66%, respectively.

In contrast, the proportions of adults reporting crime (63%) and immigration (58%) as important issues facing the UK have increased compared with October 2022, (49% and 43%, respectively). Housing (56%) has remained stable as an important issue facing the UK since October 2022 (53%).

Figure 1: The NHS, the cost of living, and the economy have been the most-commonly reported important issues facing the UK since October 2022

Proportion of adults reporting each important issue, Great Britain, October 2022 to February 2025

Notes:

1. Question: "What do you think are important issues facing the UK today?"
2. Base: all adults.
3. Respondents could select more than one option. Responses were presented in a randomised order to reduce ordering bias.
4. Estimates and associated confidence intervals for all response categories are provided in the datasets associated with this release.
5. The length of each data collection period presented in this time series may be different.

Download the data

3 . Household finances and the Cost of Living

Around 3 in 5 adults (59%) reported that their cost of living has increased in the last month. This proportion has been increasing since the low of 45% between 5 to 28 July 2024.

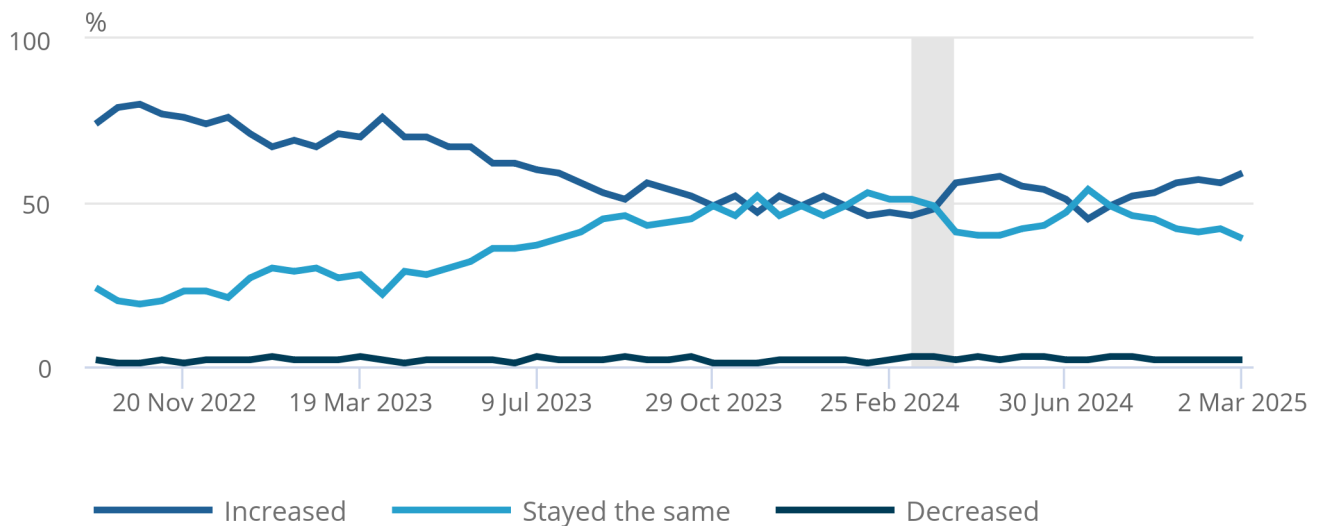
Around 2 in 5 (39%) reported that their cost of living has stayed the same and 2% said it had decreased in the last month.

Figure 2: More people were reporting increases in their cost of living in the past month, when compared with July 2024

Proportion of adults reporting cost of living increases in the past month, Great Britain, 14 September 2022 to 2 March 2025

Figure 2: More people were reporting increases in their cost of living in the past month, when compared with July 2024

Proportion of adults reporting cost of living increases in the past month, Great Britain, 14 September 2022 to 2 March 2025



Source: Opinions and Lifestyle Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Question: "Has your cost of living changed compared to one month ago?"
2. Base: all adults
3. In the period 27 March to 7 April 2024, changes were made to the survey design to allow us to measure the short- and long-term impacts of the cost of living. These may have had an impact on responses to this question.
4. The length of each data collection period presented in this time series may be different.
5. Percentages may not sum to 100% because of rounding.

The proportion of those reporting a rise in their cost of living, compared with a month ago, increases with age (52% of those aged 16 to 29 years, 59% of those aged 30 to 49 years, 60% of those aged 50 to 69 years, and 68% of those aged 70 years and over). A similar proportion of men (59%) and women (60%) reported cost-of-living increases compared with one month ago.

Reasons for cost-of-living increases

The most-commonly reported reason given by adults in the latest period for a rise in their cost of living remains the price of their food shop (93%). This has been the case since we first asked the question in November 2021 (Figure 3).

Around 3 in 4 (76%) adults reported that a reason for their cost of living increasing was a rise in the price of their energy bills. This figure is similar to those from February 2024 (73% in the period 14 to 25 February 2024) and February 2023 (79% in the period 8 to 19 February 2023). Overall, the number of adults reporting energy bills as a reason for their cost of living increasing has risen since July 2024 (45%).

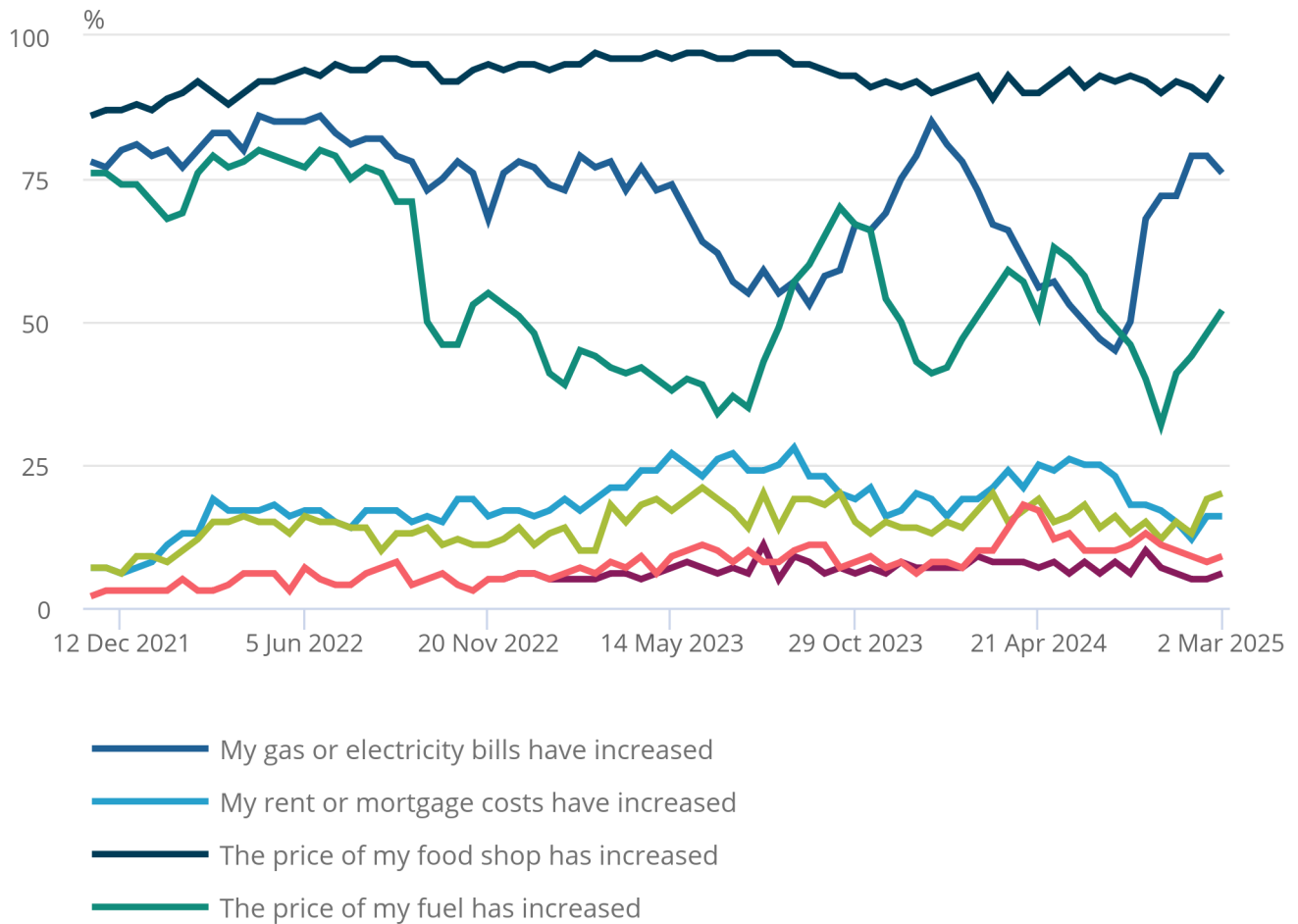
Around 1 in 2 (52%) adults reported that a reason for their cost of living increasing was the price of their fuel. While this proportion has increased steadily since a low in October 2024 (32%), this month, it has returned to a similar level to July 2024 (49%). For more information on fuel prices, please see the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero [weekly fuel price release](#).

Figure 3. The price of a food shop has remained the most-commonly reported reason for cost-of-living increases since November 2021

Proportion of adults reporting reasons for increases in their cost of living, Great Britain, 14 November 2021 to 2 March 2025

Figure 3. The price of a food shop has remained the most-commonly reported reason for cost-of-living increases since November 2021

Proportion of adults reporting reasons for increases in their cost of living, Great Britain, 14 November 2021 to 2 March 2025



Source: Opinions and Lifestyle Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Question: "Over the last month, in which ways has your cost of living increased?"
2. Base: adults who reported their cost of living had increased in the past month.
3. Respondents could select more than one option, estimates and associated confidence intervals for all response categories are provided in [our accompanying dataset](#).
4. Responses were presented in a randomised order to reduce ordering bias.
5. The length of each data collection period presented in this time series may be different.

Actions taken because of rising cost of living

In the latest period, survey participants' most-commonly reported actions taken because of the rising cost of living were:

- Spending less on non-essentials (63%)
- Shopping around more (42%)
- Using less fuel in their home (41%)
- Spending less on food and essentials (40%)

Spending less on non-essentials was the most selected option across all age groups (67% among those aged 16 to 29 years, 69% among those aged 30 to 49 years, 60% among those aged 50 to 69 years and 50% among those aged 70 years and over).

Those who reported using less fuel in their home were more likely to be older (47% of those aged 70 years and over and 49% of those aged 50 to 69 years, compared with 38% of those aged 30 to 49 years and 30% of those aged 16 to 29 years).

4 . Affordability

In the latest period, 21% of adults said they had borrowed more money or used more credit in the last month, when compared with a year ago.

Those aged 30 to 49 were more likely to report this when compared with any other age group (30% compared with 18% for those aged 16 to 29 years; 20% for those aged 50 to 69 years and 10% for those aged 70 years and over).

When asked about their ability to pay an unexpected, but necessary bill of £850, around a quarter (24%) said they would be unable to pay. This has remained relatively stable in the last year, with 28% reporting this between 14 to 25 February 2024.

Those aged 70 years and over (16%) were less likely to report being unable to afford an unexpected expense of £850 compared with 24% of those aged 16 to 29 years; 29% of those aged 30 to 49 years; and 24% of those aged 50 to 69 years.

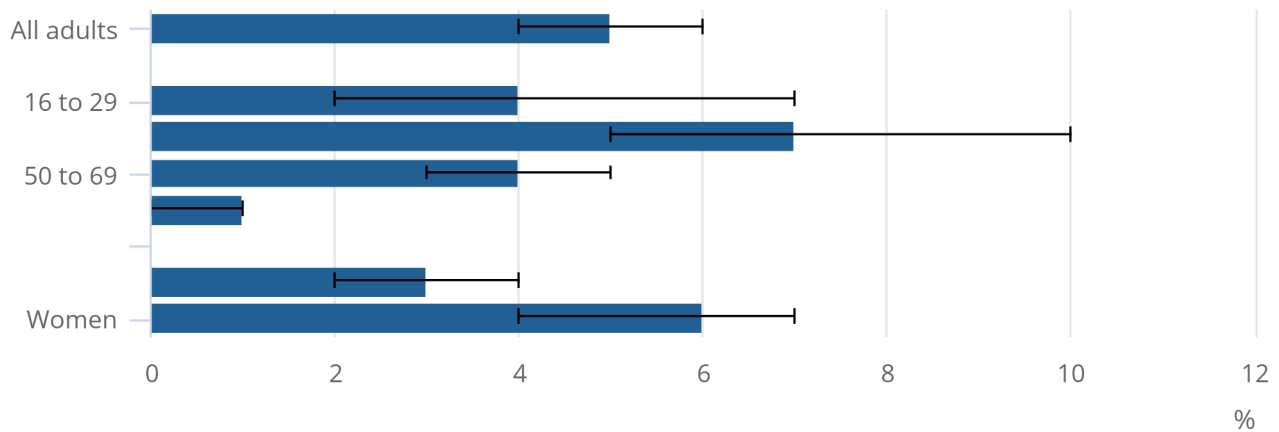
Around 1 in 20 (5%) adults reported that they had not been able to pay a direct debit, standing order or household bill in the last month. Those aged 30 to 49 years were more likely to report this (7%) than those aged years 70 and over (1%). Women (6%) were more likely to report this than men (3%).

Figure 4: Around 7% of adults aged 30 to 49 years reported not being able to pay a direct debit, standing order, or bill in the past month

Proportion of adults reporting that they had not been able to pay a direct debit, standing order or bill in the past month, Great Britain, 5 February to 2 March 2025

Figure 4: Around 7% of adults aged 30 to 49 years reported not being able to pay a direct debit, standing order, or bill in the past month

Proportion of adults reporting that they had not been able to pay a direct debit, standing order or bill in the past month, Great Britain, 5 February to 2 March 2025



Source: Opinions and Lifestyle Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Question: " Have you had a direct debit, standing order, or bill you have not been able to pay in the past month?"
2. Base: all adults.
3. Percentages may not sum to 100% because of rounding or suppression.
4. Estimates and associated confidence intervals for all response categories are provided in the datasets associated with this release.

Around 3% of adults said they had run out of food in the last 2 weeks and could not afford to buy more. Adults aged 30 to 49 years (5%) were more likely to report this than those aged 70 years and over (1%).

5 . Housing and Energy Bills

Around 1 in 3 (32%) adults who paid rent or mortgage bills said that they found these payments very or somewhat difficult to afford. This was similar across age groups. This proportion has decreased slightly from a similar period a year ago (39% between 14 and 25 February 2025).

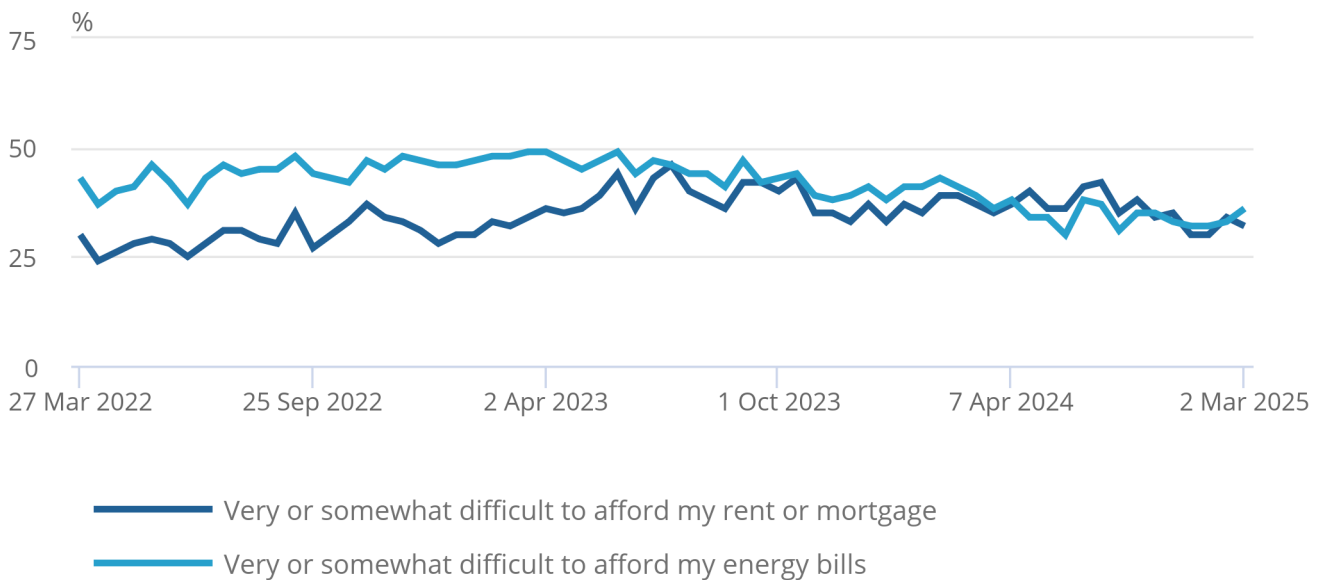
Over 1 in 3 (36%) adults who paid energy bills found it very or somewhat difficult to afford their bills. This has decreased from a similar period a year ago (41% between 14 and 25 February 2024), as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Over 3 in 10 adults found it difficult to pay their energy or housing bills

Proportion of adults who find it difficult to pay energy bills, rent or mortgage, Great Britain, 16 March 2022 to 2 March 2025

Figure 5: Over 3 in 10 adults found it difficult to pay their energy or housing bills

Proportion of adults who find it difficult to pay energy bills, rent or mortgage, Great Britain, 16 March 2022 to 2 March 2025



Source: Opinions and Lifestyle Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Questions: "How easy or difficult is it to afford your energy bills?" and "How easy or difficult is it to afford your rent or mortgage payments?"
2. Base: adults who pay for energy bills and adults who pay rent or a mortgage.
3. From 17 to 29 May 2023, changes were made to the survey design to allow us to present the questions on rent and mortgage payments more accurately. This change does not appear to have affected responses to this question.
4. Estimates and associated confidence intervals for all response categories are available in our accompanying datasets.
5. The length of each data collection period presented in this time series may differ.

The proportion of bill payers who found it very or somewhat difficult to pay energy bills was similar across age groups (35% of those aged 16 to 29 years, 37% of those aged 30 to 49 years, 36% of those aged 50 to 69 years, and 36% of those aged 70 years and over). Women (39%) were more likely to report this than men (33%).

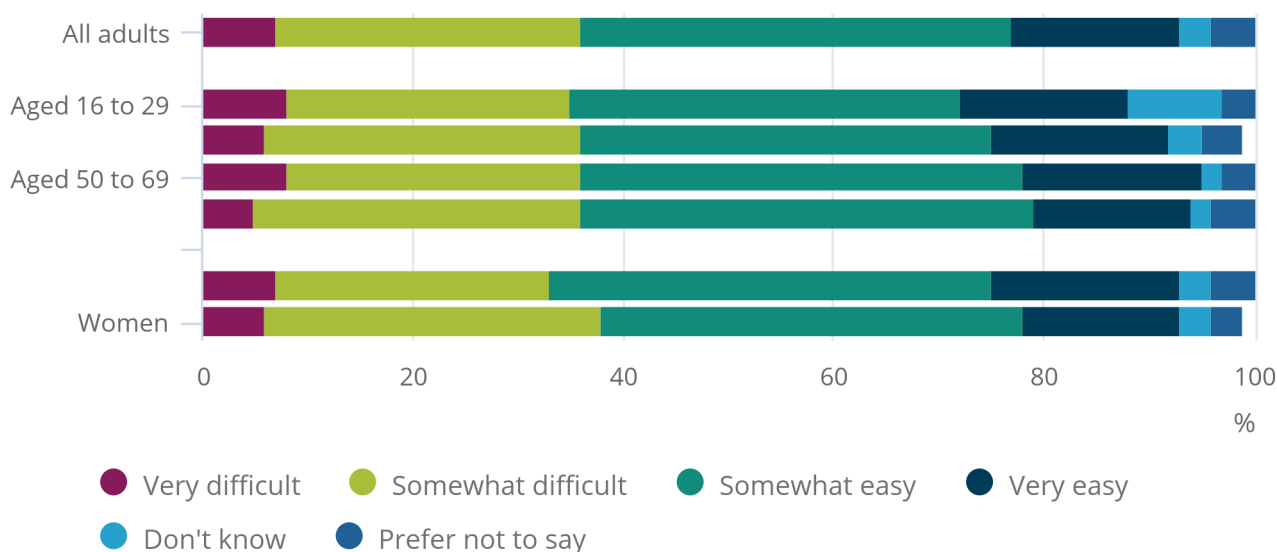
Over half (57%) of adults reported that they found paying their energy bills very easy or somewhat easy. Younger adults (52% of those aged 16 to 29 years) were less likely to report this than older adults (59% of those aged 50 to 69 years, and 58% of those aged 70 years and over).

Figure 6: Over 1 in 3 (36) adults reported that their energy bills were very or somewhat difficult to afford

Proportion of adults reporting how easy or difficult is it to afford their energy bills, Great Britain, 5 February to 2 March 2025

Figure 6: Over 1 in 3 (36) adults reported that their energy bills were very or somewhat difficult to afford

Proportion of adults reporting how easy or difficult is it to afford their energy bills, Great Britain, 5 February to 2 March 2025



Source: Opinions and Lifestyle Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Question: "How easy or difficult is it to afford your energy bills?"
2. Base: all adults who pay energy bills.
3. Percentages may not sum to 100% because of rounding or suppression.
4. Estimates and associated confidence intervals for all response categories are provided in our accompanying datasets.

Around 1 in 6 (15%) adults reported that they were occasionally, hardly ever or never able to stay warm at home. This is similar to the figure last year (17% in the period 14 to 25 February 2024). Those aged 70 years and over (10%) were least likely to report this compared with the younger age groups (16% for those aged 16 to 29 years, 17% for those aged 30 to 49 years and 15% for those aged 50 to 69 years).

6 . Data on public opinions and social trends

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

Dataset | Released 21 March 2025

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

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

Dataset | Released 21 March 2025

Personal well-being, loneliness and what people in Great Britain felt were important issues; indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

[Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: NHS hospital waiting experience](#)

Dataset | Released 21 March 2025

Experiences of being on an NHS hospital waiting list for adults in Great Britain; indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

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

Dataset | Released 21 March 2025

Working arrangements of people in Great Britain; indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

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

Dataset | Released 21 March 2025

Social mobility and life opportunities across different generations in Great Britain; indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

7 . Data sources and quality

The analysis in this bulletin is based on adults aged 16 years and over in Great Britain.

In the latest period, (5 February to 2 March 2025) we sampled 9,577 households. This sample was randomly selected from people who had previously completed the Labour Market Survey (LMS) or Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN). The responding sample for the latest period contained 4,043 individuals, representing a 42% response rate.

Survey weights were applied to make estimates representative of the population, based on our population estimates. Estimates for some groups of the population may be subject to greater [uncertainty](#) because of smaller sample sizes for these groups (for example, younger adults).

For all estimates in the datasets, [confidence intervals](#) are provided. Where comparisons between estimates are made, associated confidence intervals should be used to assess the [statistical significance](#) of the differences. In some cases, additional statistical hypothesis testing was performed to identify differences between groups.

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

[Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators: 20 March 2025](#)

Bulletin | Released 20th March 2025

Early data on the UK economy and society. These faster indicators are created using rapid response surveys, novel data sources and innovative methods. These are official statistics in development.

[Business insights and impact on the UK economy: 20 March 2025](#)

Bulletin | Released 20th March 2025

The impact of challenges facing the economy and other events on UK businesses, including financial performance, workforce, trade and business resilience.

[The impact of winter pressures on different population groups in Great Britain: 18 October 2023 to 1 January 2024](#)

Article | Released 29 January 2024

In-depth analysis on how increases in the cost of living and difficulty accessing NHS services have impacted people's lives during the winter period.

[Impact of increased cost of living on adults across Great Britain: July to October 2023](#)

Article | Released 4 December 2023

Analysis of the groups of the population affected by recent increases in the cost of living using data from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey and of the characteristics associated with financial resilience from the Wealth and Assets Survey.

[Households' finances and saving, UK: 2020 to 2024](#)

Article | Released 22 July 2024

The article investigates the financial position of households in recent years, where the coronavirus pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis have had large impacts on flows and stocks of household finances.

9 . Cite this statistical bulletin

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 21 March 2025, ONS website, statistical bulletin, [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: February 2025](#).