

Statistical bulletin

# Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: July 2024

Social insights on daily life and events, including the cost of living, important issues and household income from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

Contact:  
Public Policy and Social Insights  
team  
policy.evidence.analysis@ons.  
gov.uk  
+44 3000 671543

Release date:  
16 August 2024

Next release:  
20 September 2024

## Table of contents

1. [Main points](#)
2. [Important issues facing the UK](#)
3. [Cost of living](#)
4. [Affordability of household expenses](#)
5. [Expectations of household income](#)
6. [Data on public opinions and social trends](#)
7. [Glossary](#)
8. [Data sources and quality](#)
9. [Related links](#)
10. [Cite this statistical bulletin](#)

# 1 . Main points

The following information is from data collected from 5 to 28 July 2024, based on adults in Great Britain.

- When asked about the important issues facing the UK today, the most commonly reported issues remain the NHS (89%), the cost of living (88%), the economy (68%), housing (60%), crime (59%) and climate change and the environment (58%).
- Just over half (54%) of adults reported their cost of living had stayed the same in the past month with less than half (45%) reporting that their cost of living had increased.
- Around a quarter (25%) of adults believed they would be unable to pay an unexpected but necessary expense of £850.

We also examined people's expectations of their household income, using data over the period 13 March to 19 May 2024.

- Around 1 in 8 (13%) adults strongly disagreed or disagreed that their household income covers their minimum basic living needs; those more likely to report this included unemployed adults (31%), renters (25%), adults who were economically inactive but not retired (24%), adults living in the most deprived areas in England (21%) and disabled adults (21%).
- Around 3 in 10 (29%) adults believed that their household income would rise in the next 12 months; men (32%) were more likely to report this than women (26%).

## 2 . Important issues facing the UK

Estimates in this section of the release are based on data collected between 5 and 28 July 2024 (the "latest period").

The NHS (89%) and the cost of living (88%) have remained the two most commonly reported important issues facing the UK today. The proportion of adults reporting the NHS as an important issue has been relatively stable since we first started asking the question in October 2022, while those reporting the cost of living as an important issue have gradually decreased over the same period (from 93% to 88% in the latest period).

The proportion of adults reporting the economy (68%) as an important issue has also gradually fallen (down from 79% in October 2022). The proportion of adults reporting housing (60%) or crime (59%) as an important issue has increased since October 2022, when these proportions were 53% and 49%, respectively (Figure 1).

### **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 July 2024

#### **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, estimates and associated confidence intervals for all response categories are provided in the datasets associated with this release.
4. The length of each data collection period presented in this time series may be different.

## Download the data

The proportion of adults aged 16 to 29 years reporting the NHS as an important issue has increased from 67% when we first started asking this question in October 2022 to 88% in the latest period. In contrast, the proportion of this age group that reported the cost of living as an important issue has remained relatively stable over the same period and was 94% in the latest period.

For adults aged 50 to 69 years and 70 years and over, the proportion reporting the cost of living as an important issue has decreased from 94% and 87%, respectively, in October 2022, to 87% and 79%, respectively, in the latest period. Estimates of important issues by age group are available for all time periods collected in Table 26 of the [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: personal well-being and loneliness dataset](#) provided with this release.

## 3 . Cost of living

## Cost of living increases

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

Just over half (54%) of adults reported that their cost of living had stayed the same in the past month, with less than half (45%) reporting that their cost of living had increased (Figure 2).

The highest proportion of adults reporting increases to their cost of living was in October 2022 (80% in the period 12 to 23 October 2022) and has generally declined to its lowest proportion in the latest period (45%).

In contrast, the proportion of adults reporting that their cost of living has stayed the same has seen a general increase over this period and is now at its highest, with over a half (54%) of adults reporting this in the latest period.

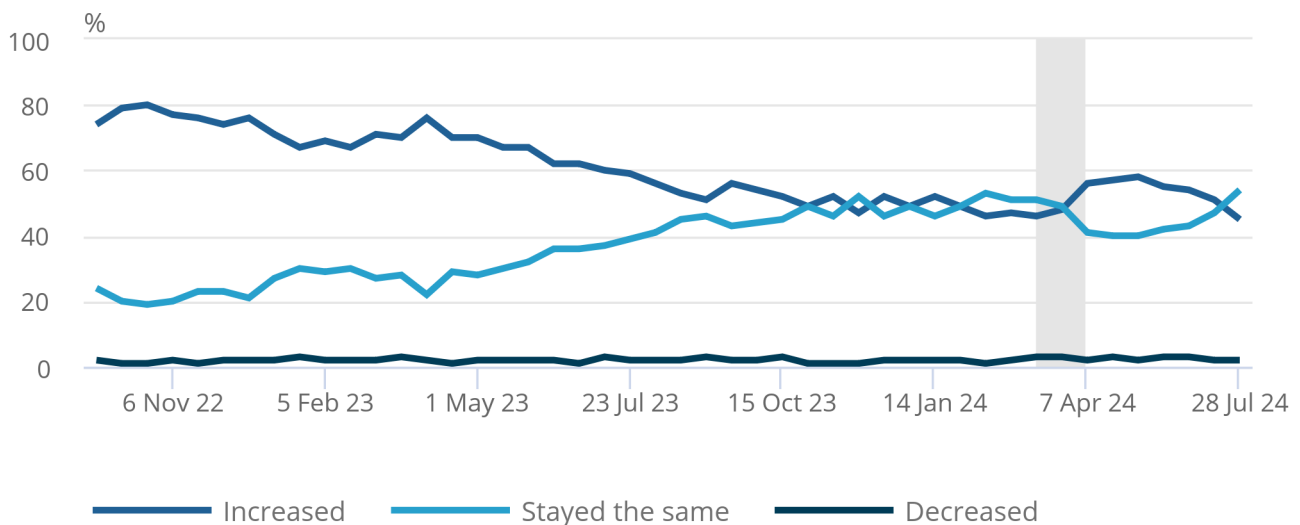
The small proportion of adults reporting that their cost of living has decreased has remained stable and was 2% in the latest period.

### Figure 2: Adults reporting an increase in their cost of living have fallen since October 2022, while those reporting that their cost of living has stayed the same have increased over the same period

Proportion of adults reporting changes to their cost of living in the past month, Great Britain, September 2022 to July 2024

Figure 2: Adults reporting an increase in their cost of living have fallen since October 2022, while those reporting that their cost of living has stayed the same have increased over the same period

Proportion of adults reporting changes to their cost of living in the past month, Great Britain, September 2022 to July 2024



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 impacted responses to this question.

## 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 (92%), as has been the case since we first asked the question in November 2021 (Figure 3).

Around a half (49%) of adults reported the price of fuel as a reason for their cost of living increasing in the latest period. This proportion has fallen since May 2024 (63%) after there had been a general increase since the start of 2024. The price of fuel replaced increases in energy bills as the second most commonly reported reason for a rise in cost of living from May 2024. For more information on fuel prices please see the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero [weekly fuel price release](#).

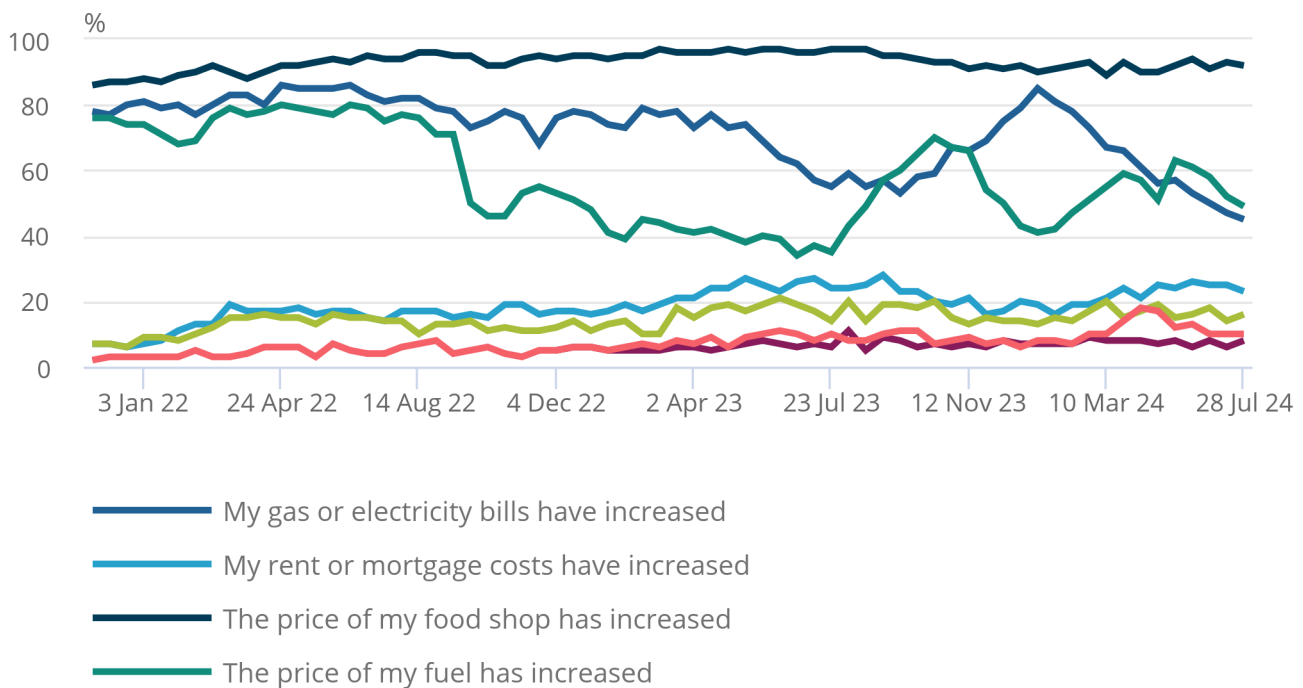
The proportion of adults reporting that increases in their cost of living are because of increases in energy bills (45%) has fallen since winter 2024 (85% in the period 4 to 14 January 2024). This may be partly explained by seasonal patterns in energy use, however, the proportion in the latest period is also lower than within a similar period in previous years (82% in July 2022 and 55% in July 2023).

**Figure 3: The price of 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, November 2021 to July 2024

Figure 3: The price of 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, November 2021 to July 2024



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 the [datasets associated with this release](#).

## Actions taken because of rising cost of living

In the latest period, the most common action reported by all adults because of their rising cost of living was spending less on non-essentials (59%), with the next most common action being shopping around more (44%) (Figure 4).

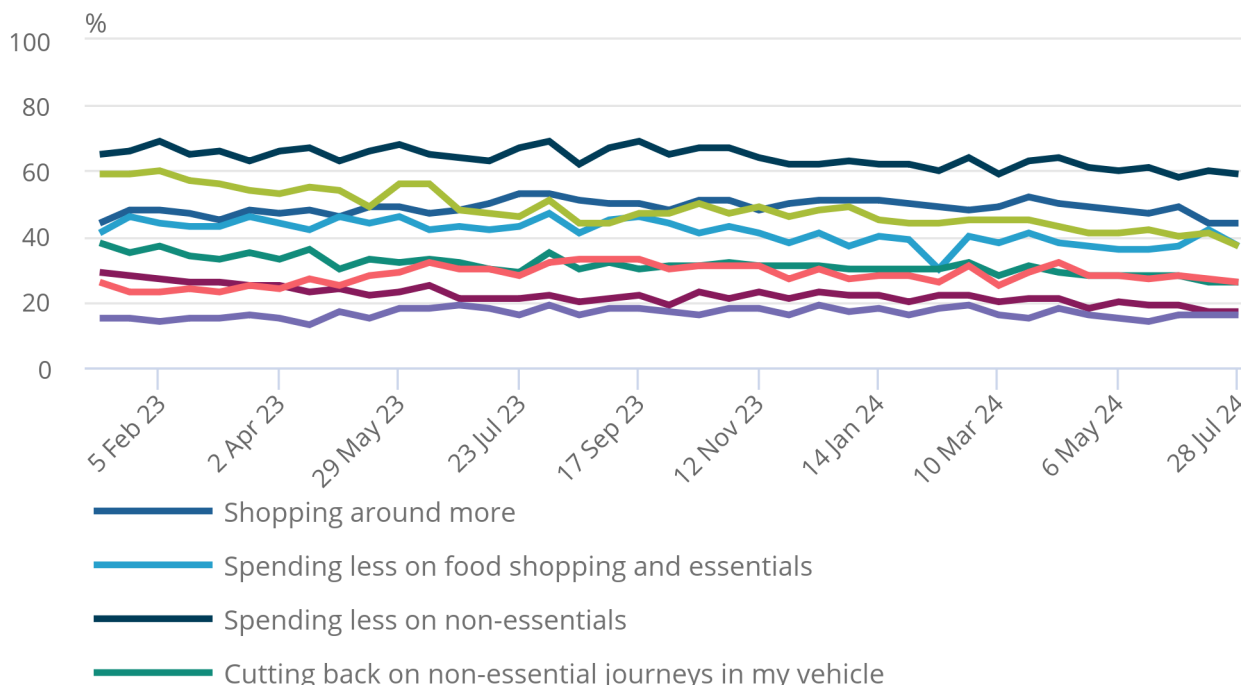
Both these proportions have decreased since July 2023, when they were 67% and 53%, respectively. These have remained the two most commonly reported actions in 2024 after shopping around more became more common than using less gas or electricity in November 2023.

### Figure 4: Around 6 in 10 (59%) adults report spending less on non-essentials

Proportion of adults taking actions because of increases in the cost of living, Great Britain, January 2023 to July 2024

## Figure 4: Around 6 in 10 (59%) adults report spending less on non-essentials

Proportion of adults taking actions because of increases in the cost of living, Great Britain, January 2023 to July 2024



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

#### Notes:

1. Question: "Which of these, if any, are you doing because of the increases in the cost of living?"
2. Base: All adults.
3. Respondents were able to choose more than one option.
4. Not all response options are included in this chart. Please see the datasets associated with this release for estimates for each option.

Adults aged 70 years and over (24%) were less likely to report spending less on food and essentials than adults aged 16 to 29 years (37%) and adults aged 30 to 49 years (46%); but more likely to report shopping around more (47%) than adults aged 16 to 29 years (25%).



## 4 . Affordability of household expenses

In the latest period, just over 4 in 10 (44%) adults who are currently making rent or mortgage payments reported that these payments had gone up in the last six months, with 35% reporting that they are finding it very or somewhat difficult to afford these payments.

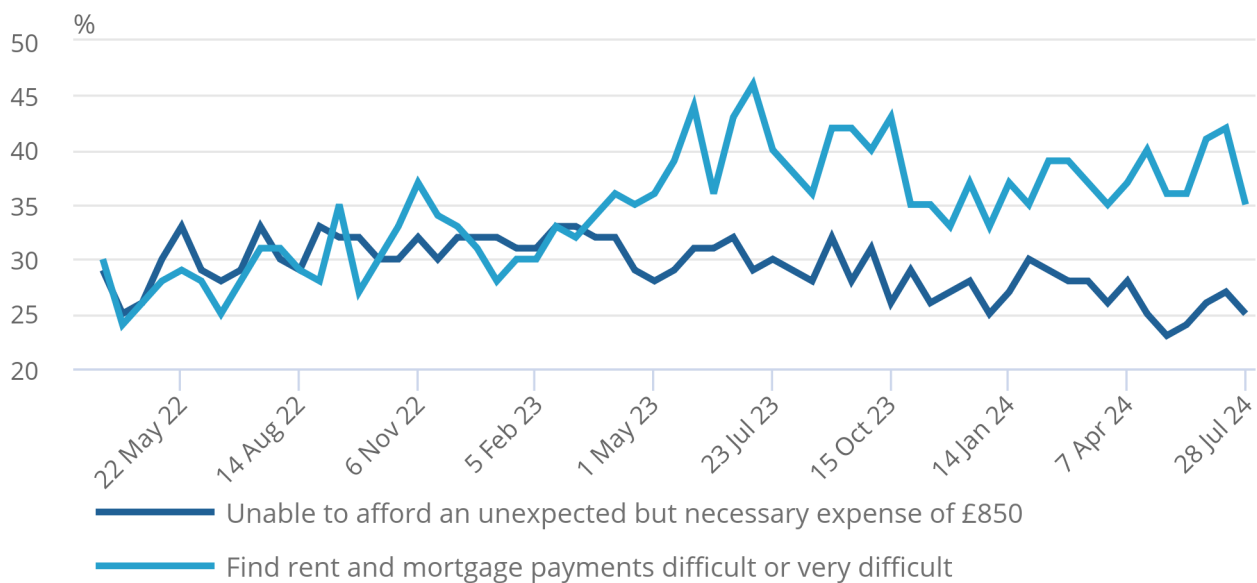
While the trend in reporting difficulty affording rent or mortgage payments has been volatile, the proportion has increased slightly from March 2022 (30% in the period 16 to 27 March 2022). By contrast, over the same period, the proportion of adults who reported that they would be unable to afford an unexpected but necessary expense of £850 has decreased slightly, from 29% to 25% in the latest period (Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Around 1 in 4 (25%) adults continue to report they are unable to afford an unexpected expense of £850**

Proportion of adults unable to afford an unexpected but necessary expense of £850 or finding it difficult (very or somewhat) to afford their rent or mortgage payments, Great Britain, March 2022 to July 2024

### Figure 5: Around 1 in 4 (25%) adults continue to report they are unable to afford an unexpected expense of £850

Proportion of adults unable to afford an unexpected but necessary expense of £850 or finding it difficult (very or somewhat) to afford their rent or mortgage payments, Great Britain, March 2022 to July 2024



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

**Notes:**

1. Questions: " Could your household afford to pay an unexpected, but necessary, expense of £850?" and "How easy or difficult is it to afford your rent or mortgage payments?".
2. Base: All adults or among adults making rent or mortgage payments.

Around a third (34%) of adults reported that they did not think that they would be able to save any money in the next 12 months, while around 1 in 25 (4%) reported that they had a direct debit, a standing order, or bill that they were unable to pay in the past month.

Adults aged 70 years and over were less likely to report they had borrowed more money (8%) or would be unable to pay an expense of £850 (15%) than adults aged 30 to 49 years (30% and 32%, respectively) and aged 50 to 69 years (24% and 20%, respectively).

Men were more likely to believe that they would be able to save money (52%) and be able to pay a necessary but unexpected expense of £850 (70%) than women (40% and 58%, respectively).

## 5 . Expectations of household income

During the period 13 March to 19 May 2024, we asked people about their household income to contribute to a United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) [in-depth review of subjective poverty](#) (PDF, 346KB). The following questions were asked to all adults:

- "To what extent do you agree or disagree that your household income covers your household's minimum living expenses?"
- "Do you believe your household income will increase in the next 12 months?"

Please note; questions were asked before the [Public Sector Pay Review](#) detailing pay increases across a number of pay review bodies.

### Income covering minimum living expenses

We asked adults if they agreed or disagreed that their income covered their minimum living expenses.

Around 7 in 10 (69%) adults either strongly agreed or agreed that their household income covered their minimum living expenses, with 18% neither agreeing nor disagreeing. Around 1 in 8 (13%) adults either strongly disagreed or disagreed (Figure 6).

Those more likely to report that they strongly disagreed or disagreed that their income covered their minimum living expenses included:

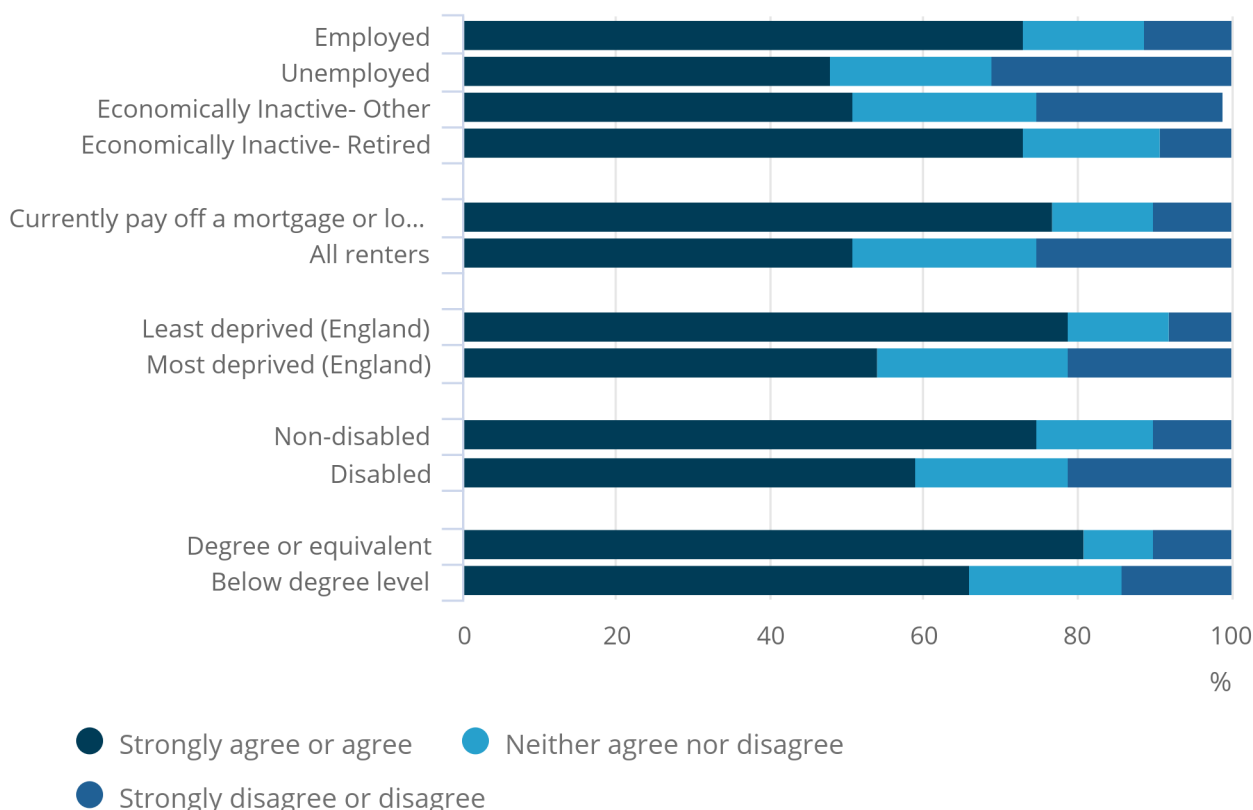
- adults who were unemployed (31%) or economically inactive for reasons other than retirement (24%) compared with employed adults (12%) and those economically inactive because of retirement (9%)
- renters (25%) compared with those currently paying off a mortgage (10%)
- those living in the most deprived fifth of areas of England (21%) compared with those living in the least deprived fifth of areas (8%)
- disabled adults (21%) compared with non-disabled adults (10%)
- those with a below degree-level qualification (15%) compared with adults with a degree-level qualification (10%)

**Figure 6: Around a quarter (25%) of all renters strongly disagreed or disagreed their income covered their minimum living expenses**

Proportion of adults who agree or disagree that their income covers their household's minimum living expenses, Great Britain, 13 March to 19 May 2024

Figure 6: Around a quarter (25%) of all renters strongly disagreed or disagreed their income covered their minimum living expenses

Proportion of adults who agree or disagree that their income covers their household's minimum living expenses, Great Britain, 13 March to 19 May 2024



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

Notes:

1. Question: " To what extent do you agree or disagree that your household income covers your household's minimum living expenses?".
2. Base: All adults.
3. The categories of least deprived and most deprived areas of England are based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) and represent adults living in the least deprived and most deprived fifth of areas in England.

## Increases to household income

Around 3 in 10 adults (29%) believed that their household income would increase in the next 12 months, with around half (48%) believing that it would remain the same and around 1 in 10 (11%) believing that it would decrease. Around 1 in 8 (12%) adults reported they did not know what would happen with their income.

Adults who were more likely to believe their household income would increase in the next 12 months included:

- those with a degree-level qualification (37%) compared with adults with a below degree-level qualification (25%)
- men (32%) compared with women (26%)
- non-disabled adults (32%) compared with disabled adults (26%)

## 6 . Data on public opinions and social trends

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

Dataset | Released 16 August 2024

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 16 August 2024

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

### [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: GP practice access](#)

Dataset | Released 16 August 2024

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) related to people's experiences of GP practice access in Great Britain.

### [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: artificial intelligence \(AI\)](#)

Dataset | Released 16 August 2024

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) on the public's awareness, opinions and expectations about artificial intelligence (AI).

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

Dataset | Released 16 August 2024

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: household income and subjective poverty](#)

Dataset | Released 16 August 2024

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) related to household income changes and subjective poverty.

### [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: social media use and attitudes towards elections](#) Dataset |

Released 16 August 2024

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) related to people's social media use and attitudes towards elections in Great Britain.

## 7 . Glossary

## Deprivation

Deprivation is represented by the [Index of Multiple Deprivation](#) (IMD) and is the official measure of relative deprivation for small areas in England. The IMD ranks every small area in England from 1 (most deprived area) to 10 (least deprived area).

Deciles are calculated by ranking the 32,844 small areas in England from most deprived to least deprived and dividing them into 10 equal groups. These range from the most deprived 10% of small areas nationally to the least deprived 10% of small areas nationally. To ensure robust sample sizes, we have further grouped deciles into quintiles.

## Disability status

To define disability, we refer to the [Government Statistical Service \(GSS\) harmonised "core" definition of disability](#). This identifies "disabled" as a person who has a physical or mental health condition or illness that has lasted or is expected to last 12 months or more that reduces their ability to carry out day-to-day activities. Respondents are asked the GSS harmonised questions in the survey, meaning that disability status is self-reported.

## Statistical significance

This bulletin presents the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) data as a summary of results. Further data, including confidence intervals for the estimates shown in the charts presented, are contained in our associated datasets. Where comparisons between groups are presented, 95% confidence intervals should be used to assess the statistical significance of the change. For more information on these terms, see our [Uncertainty and how we measure it for our surveys methodology](#).

## Other definitions

Definitions of all breakdowns of estimates used in this bulletin are available in more detail in the Notes tab of our [accompanying datasets](#).

## 8 . Data sources and quality

The analysis in this bulletin is based on adults aged 16 years and over in Great Britain. This is based on two time points. Data referring to the "latest period" are based on 1,841 responding adults for the period 5 to 28 July 2024.

The analysis in [Section 5: Expectations of household income](#) is based on the period 13 March to 19 May 2024. This comprises responses from 12,437 adults collected during five waves of data collection for the following periods:

- 13 March to 24 March 2024
- 27 March to 7 April 2024
- 10 April to 21 April 2024
- 24 April to 6 May 2024
- 8 May to 19 May 2024

Pooling five waves of data together increases sample sizes and allows us to provide estimates among different groups of the population.

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

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

### [Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators: 15 August 2024](#)

Bulletin | Released 15 August 2024

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.

### [Measuring progress, well-being and beyond GDP in the UK: August 2024](#)

Bulletin | Released 8 August 2024

Exploring quality of life in the UK, drawing on the latest economic, environmental and social statistics. This quarter we focus on the quality of life of individuals.

### [UK Measures of National Well-being Dashboard](#)

Online tool | Released 8 August 2024

An overview of well-being in the UK on an individual, community and national level. Considers change across 59 measures of well-being, grouped by 10 topic areas.

### [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.

### [Private rent and house prices, UK: August 2024](#)

Bulletin | 14 August 2024

The Price Index of Private Rents (PIPR) produces rent price and inflation statistics for the UK, tracking prices paid for new and existing tenancies in the private rental sector. Includes headline UK House Price Index statistics.

### [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.

### [Retail sales, Great Britain: July 2024](#)

Bulletin | Released 16 August 2024

The Retail Sales Index (RSI) is an important economic indicator and one of the earliest short-term measures of economic activity.

## 10 . Cite this statistical bulletin

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 16 August 2024, ONS website, statistical bulletin, [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: July 2024](#)