

Statistical bulletin

Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: July 2026

Social insights on daily life, including experiences of the cost of living and water use and restrictions, from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

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1 . Main points

The following information is from data collected from 1 to 26 July 2026, based on adults in Great Britain.

- The cost of living (88%), the NHS (78%), and the economy (70%) were the most commonly reported issues facing the UK today.
- Almost 3 in 5 adults (56%) reported that their cost of living had increased compared with a month ago.
- Among those who reported that their cost of living had increased, the most commonly reported reasons for this increase were the price of food shopping (94%), the price of fuel (68%), and gas or electricity bills (66%).
- Around 6 in 10 adults (61%) reported being very or somewhat worried about rising costs of living, while 21% were neither worried nor unworried and 15% were somewhat unworried or not at all worried; adults aged 30 to 49 years were more likely to report being very or somewhat worried (70%).
- More than 4 in 5 adults (84%) reported taking at least one action to cut back on the amount of water they use in the past month; this was more common among women (91%) and adults aged 70 years and over (90%).
- The most commonly reported actions taken to cut back the amount of water used included not leaving the tap running (64%), waiting until the washing machine or dishwasher is full before putting it on (55%) and taking shorter showers (40%).

2 . Important issues facing the UK

In the latest period (1 to 26 July 2026), the most frequently reported issues facing the UK today continued to be:

- the cost of living (88%)
- the NHS (78%)
- the economy (70%)

Other commonly reported issues during this time included:

- climate change and the environment (59%)
- crime (58%)
- immigration (56%)
- housing (54%)

Figure 1: The cost of living, the NHS, 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 2026

Notes:

1. Respondents could select more than one option.
2. The length of each data collection period presented in this time series may be different.
3. See our [accompanying datasets](#) for confidence intervals, additional response options and related footnotes.

3 . Cost of living

In the latest period (1 to 26 July 2026), almost 3 in 5 adults (56%) reported that their cost of living had increased, compared with one month ago. This proportion is lower than in April 2026 (79%) and May 2026 (66%), but is similar to this time a year ago (59% in the period 2 to 27 July 2025).

Figure 2: Almost 3 in 5 adults (56%) reported that their cost of living had increased, compared with one month ago

Proportion of adults reporting cost of living changes in the past month, Great Britain, 14 September 2022 to 26 July 2026

Notes

1. Changes were made to the survey design in the period 27 March to 7 April 2024, which may have had an impact on responses to this question.
2. The length of each data collection period presented in this time series may be different.

Reasons for increases in the cost of living

Among those who said their cost of living had increased in the past month, the most commonly reported reasons for this increase were:

- price of food shopping (94%)
- price of fuel (68%)
- gas or electricity bills (66%)

The price of food shopping has been the most commonly reported reason for increases in the cost of living since we first started asking this question in November 2021.

The proportion of adults reporting the price of fuel as a reason for increases in the cost of living was lower in July 2026 (68%), compared with April 2026 (80%) and May 2026 (77%). However, the proportion in July 2026 was still higher than a year ago (45% in July 2025).

The proportion of adults reporting the price of gas or electricity bills as a reason for increases in the cost of living was 66% in July 2026, similar to June 2026 (67%), but higher than in July 2025 (57%) and July 2024 (45%).

Figure 3: More than 9 in 10 adults (94%) who said their cost of living had increased reported the price of their food shop as a reason

Proportion of adults who said that their cost of living had increased compared with a month ago reporting the reasons for this increase, Great Britain, 14 November 2021 to 26 July 2026

Notes:

1. Based on adults who reported their cost of living had increased in the past month.
2. Respondents could select more than one option.
3. The length of each data collection period presented in this time series may be different.
4. See our [accompanying datasets](#) for confidence intervals, additional response options and related footnotes.

Actions taken because of increases in the cost of living

The most commonly reported actions taken because of increases in the cost of living were:

- spending less on non-essentials (59%)
- shopping around more (41%)
- spending less on food shopping and essentials (38%)
- using less fuel, such as gas or electricity, in the home (33%)

Adults aged 16 to 29 years were less likely to report shopping around more (27%) because of the increases in the cost of living, compared with:

- 46% of those aged 30 to 49 years
- 47% of those aged 50 to 69 years
- 43% of those aged 70 years and over

Women were more likely to report using their savings (32%), compared with men (25%), because of increases in the cost of living.

Worries about rising costs of living

We also asked respondents how worried or unworried they were about rising costs of living in the past two weeks. Around 6 in 10 adults (61%) reported being very or somewhat worried, while 21% were neither worried nor unworried, and 15% were somewhat unworried or not at all worried. This is similar to June 2026, when 62% of adults reported being very or somewhat worried about rising costs of living.

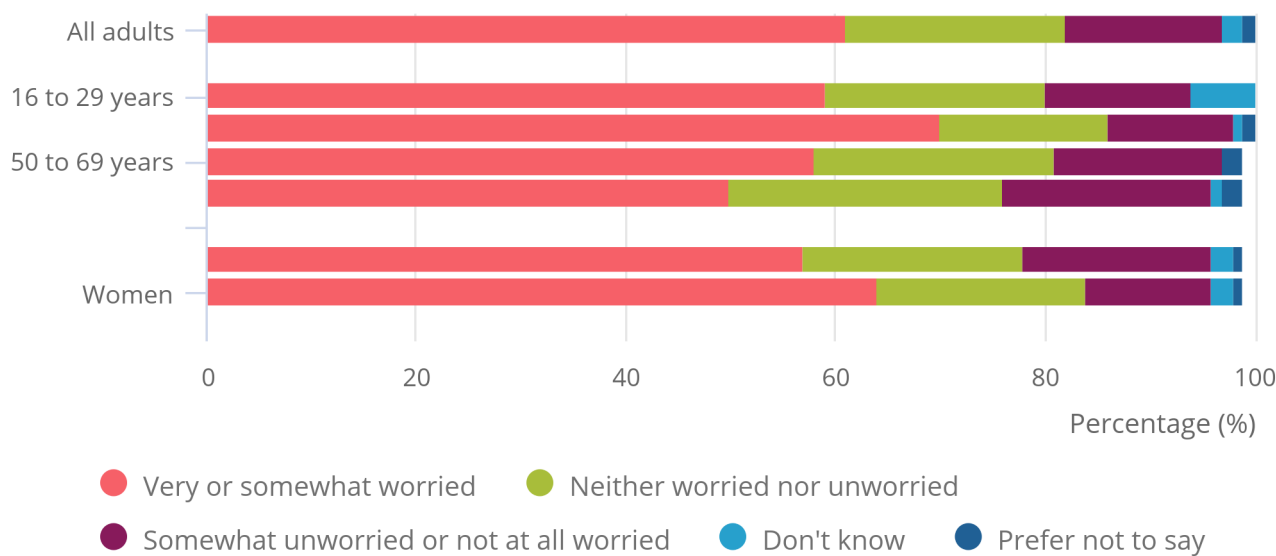
Adults aged 30 to 49 years were more likely to report being very or somewhat worried about rising costs of living (70%), compared with those aged 50 to 69 years (58%), or 70 years and over (50%). Women were also more likely to report being very or somewhat worried about rising costs of living (64%), compared with men (57%).

Figure 4: Around 7 in 10 adults aged 30 to 49 years reported being very or somewhat worried about rising costs of living in the past two weeks

Proportion of adults reporting how worried or unworried they were about rising costs of living in the past two weeks, by age group and sex, Great Britain, 1 to 26 July 2026

Figure 4: Around 7 in 10 adults aged 30 to 49 years reported being very or somewhat worried about rising costs of living in the past two weeks

Proportion of adults reporting how worried or unworried they were about rising costs of living in the past two weeks, by age group and sex, Great Britain, 1 to 26 July 2026



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

Notes:

1. Estimates may not sum to 100 because of rounding or suppression.

4 . Financial pressures

In the latest period (1 to 26 July 2026), we explored a range of different financial pressures facing adults across Great Britain.

Housing and energy bill affordability

Nearly 1 in 3 (32%) adults who pay energy bills reported finding it very or somewhat difficult to afford them. This is down from a high of 49% in spring 2023 but is similar to this time a year ago (33% in the period 2 to 27 July 2025). Around 3 in 5 (60%) adults reported that they found paying their energy bills very or somewhat easy.

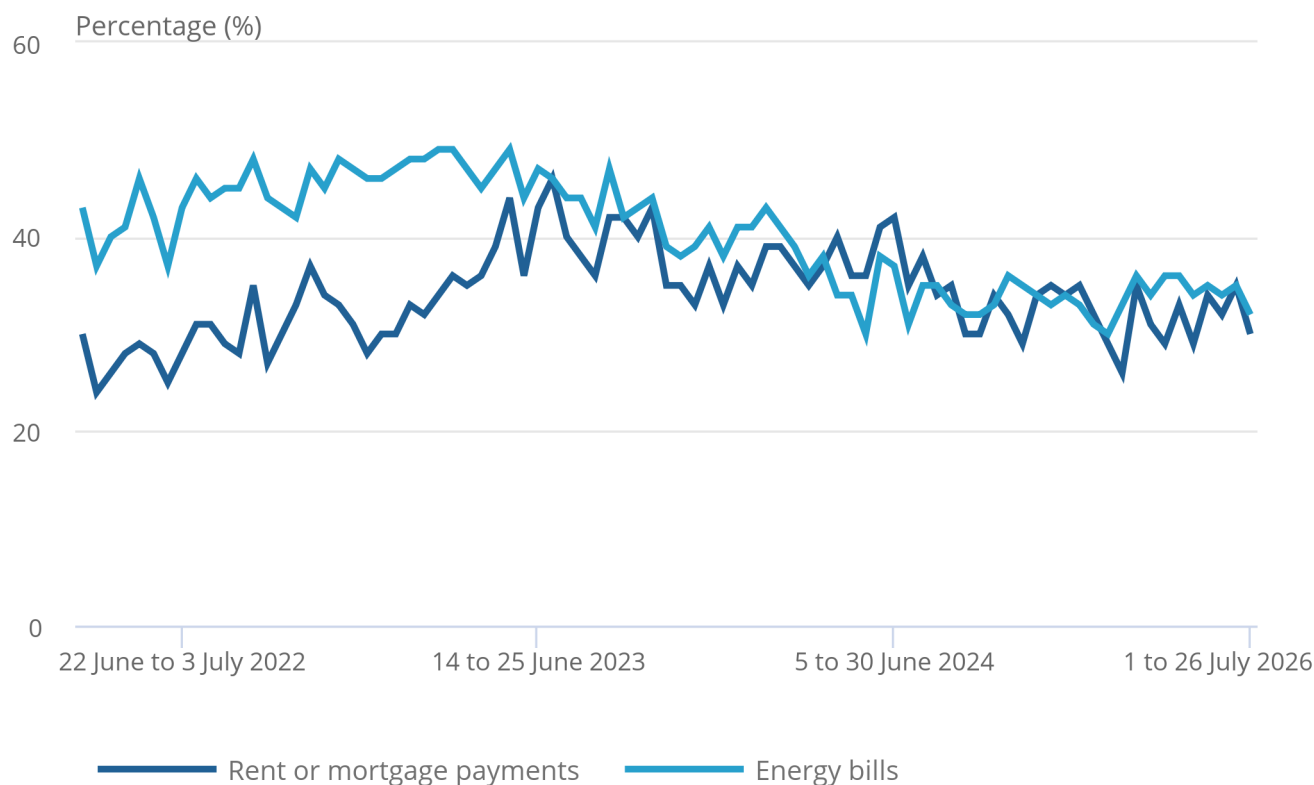
Nearly 1 in 3 (30%) adults who pay rent or mortgage bills reported finding it very or somewhat difficult to afford these payments. This is down from a high of 46% between 28 June and 9 July 2023 but is similar to this time a year ago (35% in the period 2 to 27 July 2025). Nearly two-thirds of adults (64%) reported that they found paying their rent or mortgage bills very or somewhat easy.

Figure 5: Nearly 1 in 3 adults (32%) reported finding it difficult to pay their energy bills

Proportion of adults reporting finding it very or somewhat difficult to pay their energy bills and rent or mortgage payments, Great Britain, 16 March 2022 to 26 July 2026

Figure 5: Nearly 1 in 3 adults (32%) reported finding it difficult to pay their energy bills to pay their energy bills

Proportion of adults reporting finding it very or somewhat difficult to pay their energy bills and rent or mortgage payments, Great Britain, 16 March 2022 to 26 July 2026



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

Notes:

1. Based on adults who pay energy bills and adults who pay rent or a mortgage.
2. 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.
3. See our [accompanying datasets](#) for confidence intervals, related footnotes and other response options.
4. The length of each data collection period presented in this time series may be different.

Food affordability

Around 1 in 25 (4%) adults reported that in the past two weeks, they or their household had run out of food and could not afford to buy more.

The most commonly reported actions taken to save money on food because of increases in the cost of living were:

- eating out less, for example, takeaways or restaurants (55%)
- buying cheaper food (50%)
- buying discounted food (38%)

5 . Water use and restrictions

This month, we asked adults about their experiences of water use and water use restrictions in their local area.

Actions to reduce water use

The most commonly reported actions adults said they had taken to cut back on the amount of water they use in the past month were:

- not leaving the tap running (64%)
- waiting until the washing machine or dishwasher is full before putting it on (55%)
- taking shorter showers (40%)
- using less tap water, including hosepipes, in the garden (36%)

More than 4 in 5 adults (84%) reported taking at least one action to cut back on the amount of water they use in the past month. Adults aged 70 years and over were more likely to report taking at least one action, compared with all other age groups.

This is broken down as:

- 81% of those aged 16 to 29 years
- 81% of those aged 30 to 49 years
- 84% of those aged 50 to 69 years
- 90% of those aged 70 years and over

Women were also more likely to report taking at least one action to cut back the amount of water they use (91%), compared with men (76%). Women were more likely to report:

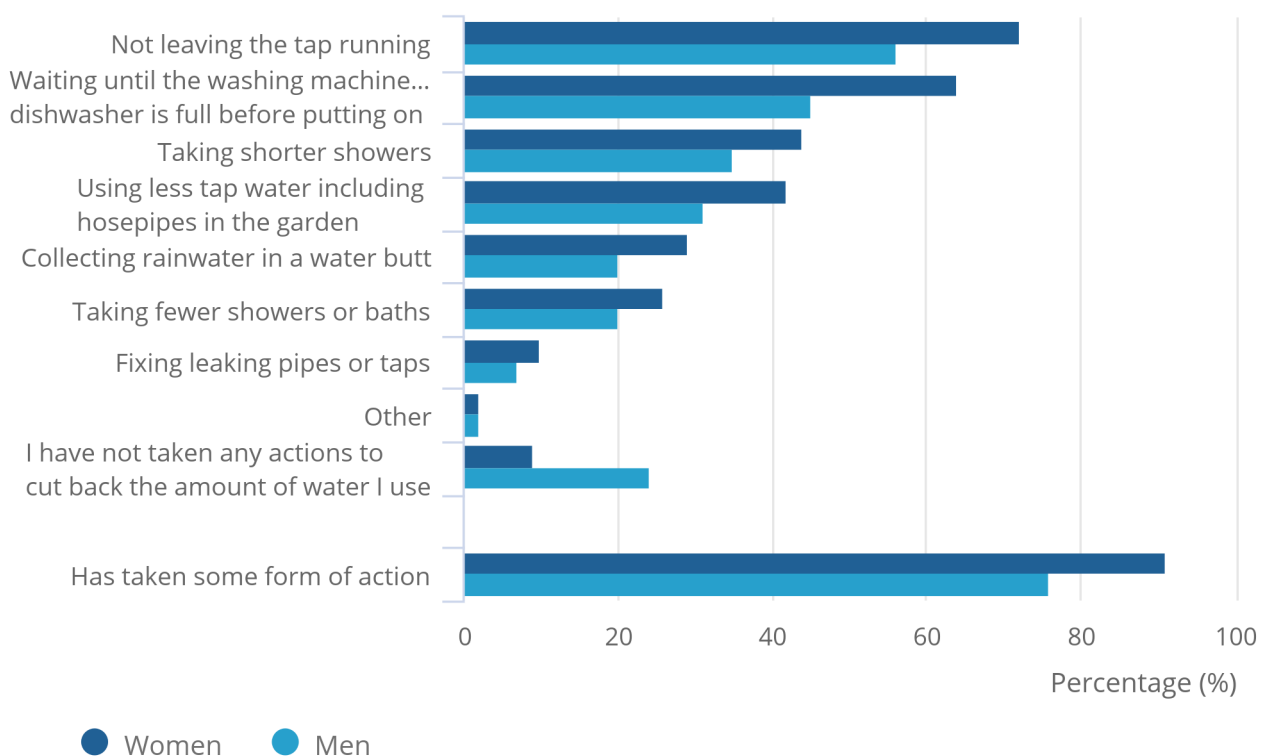
- not leaving the tap running (72%, compared with 56% of men)
- waiting until the washing machine or dishwasher is full before putting it on (64%, compared with 45%)
- taking shorter showers (44%, compared with 35%)
- using less tap water, including hosepipes, in the garden (42%, compared with 31%)
- collecting rainwater in a water butt (29%, compared with 20%)

Figure 6: Women were more likely than men to report taking at least one action, in the past month, to cut back on the amount of water they use

Proportion of adults reporting actions to cut back on the amount of water they use in the past month, by sex, Great Britain, 1 to 26 July 2026

Figure 6: Women were more likely than men to report taking at least one action, in the past month, to cut back on the amount of water they use

Proportion of adults reporting actions to cut back on the amount of water they use in the past month, by sex, Great Britain, 1 to 26 July 2026



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

Notes:

1. Respondents could select more than one option.
2. See our [accompanying datasets](#) for confidence intervals and related footnotes.

Water use restrictions

Around 1 in 8 adults (12%) reported that there were currently water use restrictions in their local area, 76% said there were no water use restrictions in their local area, and 12% said they did not know.

A similar proportion of adults reported taking at least one action to reduce their water use in the past month, regardless of whether they said there were water restrictions in their local area.

However, those who reported water restrictions were more likely to say they used less tap water, including hosepipes, in their garden (53%) than those who reported no restrictions (34%) or did not know if restrictions were in place (33%).

Data collection took place during a period when water companies in England and Wales introduced restrictions, or Temporary Use Bans (TUBs). On 29 July, it was declared that [over half of England was in drought](#) and around 40% of the population of England was affected by a TUB.

The estimates in this bulletin are based on respondents' reports of water use restrictions and represent a snapshot at the time they completed the survey (between 1 and 26 July 2026). This means estimates will not capture any restrictions put in place after respondents completed the survey.

6 . Data on public opinions and social trends

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

Dataset | Released 14 August 2026

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 14 August 2026

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: water restrictions and use](#)

Dataset | Released 14 August 2026

Experiences of water use and water restrictions for people in Great Britain; indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

[Public opinions and social trends. Great Britain: winter pressures](#)

Dataset | Released 14 August 2026

People's experiences of winter pressures in Great Britain; indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

[Opinions and Lifestyle Survey: sample sizes, response rates and user requested data](#)

Dataset | Released 14 August 2026

Survey information including sample sizes, response rates and user requested data for the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

7 . Data sources and quality

Sample

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

In the latest period, 1 to 26 July 2026, we sampled 8,730 households. This sample was randomly selected from people who had previously completed the Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS) or Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN). There were 3,490 individuals in the responding sample for the latest period, representing a 40% response rate.

Data quality

We applied survey weights 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).

From the 1 to 26 April 2026 data collection period onwards, the population totals used in weighting OPN estimates are based on 2024 mid-year estimates using updated population projections. They are initially projected forward using scaling factors derived from 2022-based subnational population projections by local authority, age, and sex, and subsequently constrained to 2022-based national population projection totals. Further, these estimates are adjusted to cover only the population living in households and student halls of residence.

We provide [confidence intervals](#) for all estimates in the datasets. Where 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 is available in our [Opinions and Lifestyle Survey quality and methodology information \(QMI\)](#).

8 . Related links

[Drought declared in half of England](#)

External webpage | Published 29 July 2026

Government press release announcing drought declarations, restrictions, or Temporary Use Bans (TUBs) and associated water management measures across parts of England.

[Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: June 2026](#)

Bulletin | Released 17 July 2026

Social insights on daily life, including important issues facing the UK and attitudes to artificial intelligence, from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

[Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: May 2026](#)

Bulletin | Released 19 June 2026

Social insights on daily life, including cost of living, goods shortages, and worries about international conflict, from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

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

Online tool | Updated 13 August 2026

An overview of the UK economy and society, based on rapid response surveys, novel data sources, and innovative methods.

[Business insights and impact on the UK economy: 6 August 2026](#)

Bulletin | Released 6 August 2026

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

9 . Cite this statistical bulletin

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