

Statistical bulletin

# Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: May 2026

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

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## Table of contents

1. [Main points](#)
2. [Important issues facing the UK](#)
3. [Cost of living](#)
4. [Financial pressures](#)
5. [Worries about international conflict](#)
6. [Shortages of goods](#)
7. [Data on public opinions and social trends](#)
8. [Data sources and quality](#)
9. [Related links](#)
10. [Cite this statistical bulletin](#)

# 1 . Main points

The following information is from data collected from 6 to 31 May 2026, based on adults in Great Britain.

- The cost of living (89%), the NHS (80%), and the economy (72%) were the most commonly reported issues facing the UK today.
- Among those who reported that their cost of living had increased compared with a month ago (66%), the most commonly reported reasons were the price of food shopping (93%), the price of fuel (77%), and gas or electricity bills (61%).
- Around 7 in 10 adults (70%) agreed or strongly agreed that their household income covers their household's minimum living expenses, while 17% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 13% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- More than 3 in 4 adults (77%) reported being very or somewhat worried about international conflict; the most commonly reported worries about international conflict were fuel availability or prices (67%), energy supply or prices (66%), and the safety or well-being of those directly affected (61%).
- Around 1 in 12 adults (8%) reported being unable to buy or access essential food items that they needed in the past two weeks, and 15% of adults reported being unable to buy or access other food items.

## 2 . Important issues facing the UK

In the latest period (6 to 31 May 2026), the most frequently reported issues facing the UK today continued to be:

- the cost of living (89%)
- the NHS (80%)
- the economy (72%)

Other commonly reported issues during this time included:

- crime (57%)
- immigration (57%)
- international conflict (54%)
- housing (53%)
- climate change and the environment (53%)

### **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 May 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 . Cost of living**

In the latest period (6 to 31 May 2026), around 2 in 3 adults (66%) reported that their cost of living had increased compared with one month ago. This proportion is lower than in April 2026, when it was 79%, but is similar to this time a year ago (62% in the period 7 May to 1 June 2025).

We also asked respondents how worried or unworried they were about rising costs of living. Around 6 in 10 adults (63%) reported being very or somewhat worried, while 20% were neither worried nor unworried, and 13% were somewhat unworried or not at all worried.

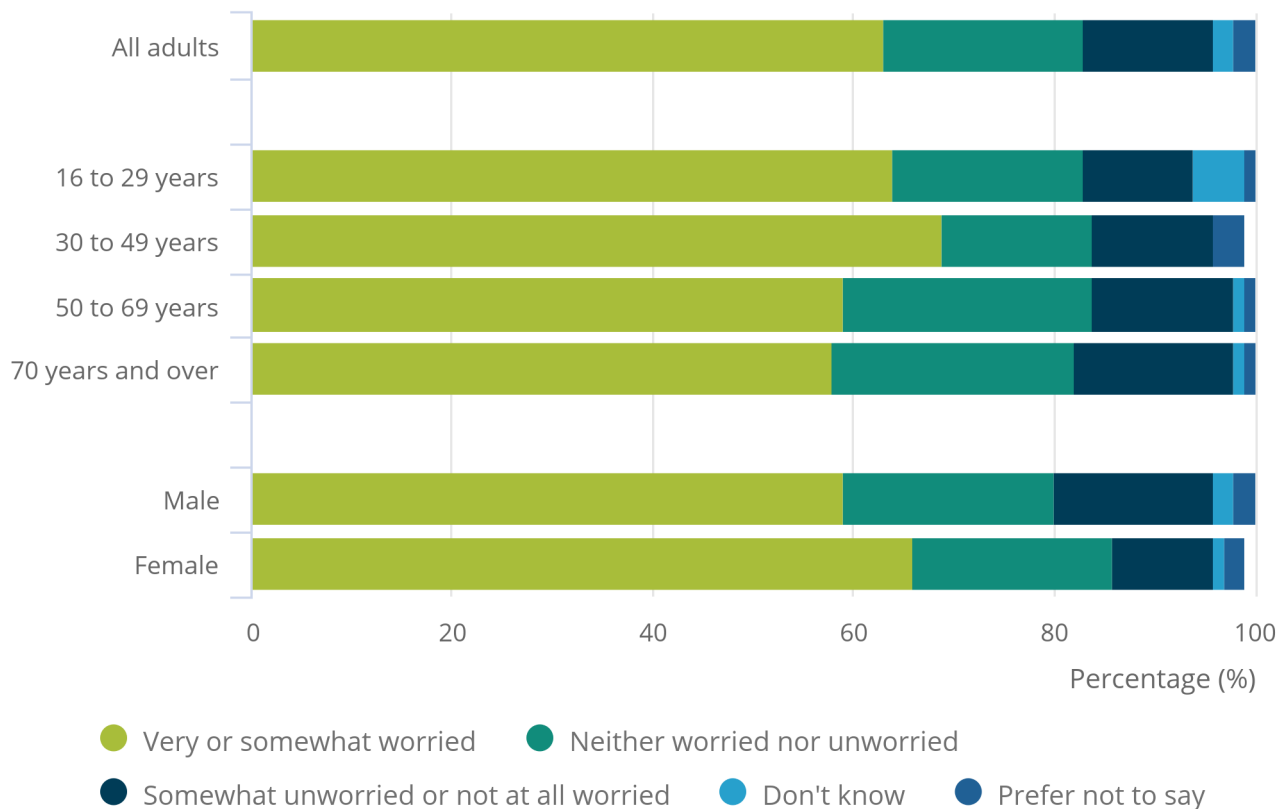
Adults aged 30 to 49 years were more likely to say they were very or somewhat worried about rising costs of living (69%), compared with those aged 50 to 69 years (59%) or 70 years and over (58%). Around 2 in 3 adults aged 16 to 29 years (64%) reported being worried about rising costs of living.

**Figure 2: Nearly 7 in 10 adults (69%) aged 30 to 49 years reported being very or somewhat worried about rising costs of living in the past two weeks, compared with 63% of all adults**

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, 6 to 31 May 2026

Figure 2: Nearly 7 in 10 adults (69%) aged 30 to 49 years reported being very or somewhat worried about rising costs of living in the past two weeks, compared with 63% of all adults

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, 6 to 31 May 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

**Reasons for increases in the cost of living**

Among those who reported that their cost of living had increased compared with a month ago, the most commonly reported reasons were:

- price of food shopping (93%)
- price of fuel (77%)
- gas or electricity bills (61%)

## Actions taken because of increases in the cost of living

Among all adults, the most commonly reported actions taken because of increases in the cost of living were:

- spending less on non-essentials (61%)
- spending less on food shopping and essentials (41%)
- shopping around more (40%)
- using less fuel such as gas or electricity in the home (35%)

Around one-third of adults (34%) reported cutting back on non-essential journeys in their vehicle because of increases in the cost of living. This is similar to the proportion who reported this in April 2026 (37%), but is an increase from a similar period last year (25% in the period 7 May to 1 June 2025).

## 4 . Financial pressures

In the latest period (6 to 31 May 2026), we explored a range of different financial pressures facing adults across Great Britain.

### Ability to save money

More than 1 in 3 adults (35%) reported that they think they would be unable to save any money in the next 12 months. This is similar to the proportion who reported this in April 2026 (38%) and this time last year (33% in the period 7 May to 1 June 2025).

### Ability to pay an unexpected but necessary expense

Around 1 in 4 adults (25%) reported their household would be unable to pay an unexpected but necessary expense of £850. This is similar to the proportion who reported this in April 2026 (23%) and this time last year (24% in the period 7 May to 1 June 2025).

Adults aged 70 years and over were less likely to report that their household would be unable to pay an unexpected but necessary expense of £850 (15%), compared with:

- 23% of those aged 50 to 69 years
- 31% of those aged 30 to 49 years
- 26% of those aged 16 to 29 years

Men were also less likely to report this (20%), compared with women (30%).

### Ability to cover living expenses

This month, we also asked respondents to what extent they agreed or disagreed that their household income covers their household's minimum living expenses and found:

- 70% agreed or strongly agreed
- 17% neither agreed nor disagreed
- 13% disagreed or strongly disagreed

This is similar to when we last asked this question between 13 March and 19 May 2024 when 69% agreed or strongly agreed, 18% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 13% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

When asked how they expect their household income to change in the next 12 months:

- 24% expected it to increase
- 50% expected it to stay the same
- 12% expected it to decrease
- 14% said they did not know

Men (30%) were more likely to report expecting an increase to their household income than women (19%).

The proportion of adults who said they expected their household income to increase in the next 12 months (24%) was lower than when we last asked this question between 13 March and 19 May 2024, when it was 29%.

## **5 . Worries about international conflict**

In the latest period (6 to 31 May 2026), we asked respondents how worried or unworried they were about international conflict. More than 3 in 4 adults (77%) reported being very or somewhat worried about international conflict, while 11% were neither worried nor unworried, and 8% were somewhat unworried or not at all worried.

Older adults (those aged 50 to 69 years and those aged 70 years and over) were more likely to report being very or somewhat worried about international conflict, compared with younger adults (those aged 16 to 29 years and 30 to 49 years). This is broken down as:

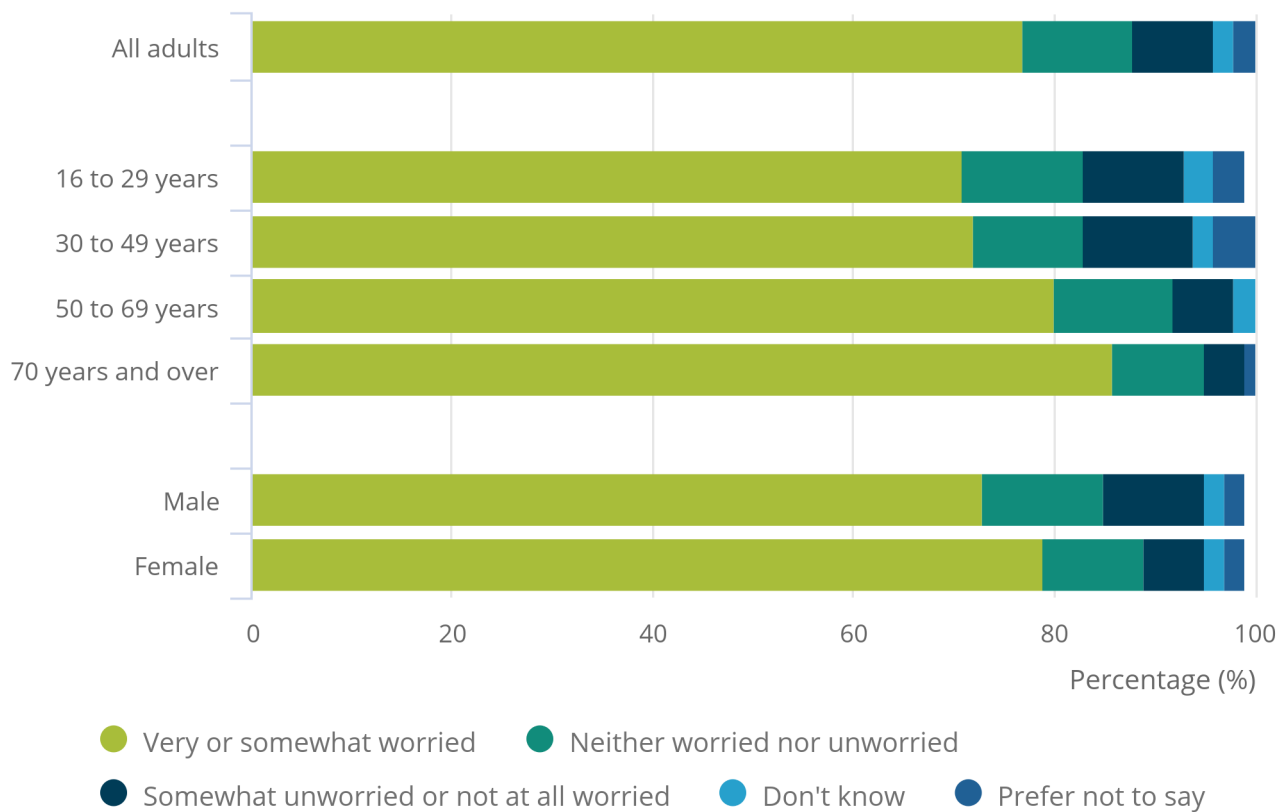
- 86% of those aged 70 years and over
- 80% of those aged 50 to 69 years
- 72% of those aged 30 to 49 years
- 71% of those aged 16 to 29 years

**Figure 3: Older adults were more likely to report being worried about international conflict compared with younger adults**

Proportion of adults reporting how worried or unworried they were about international conflict in the past two weeks, by age group and sex, Great Britain, 6 to 31 May 2026

Figure 3: Older adults were more likely to report being worried about international conflict compared with younger adults

Proportion of adults reporting how worried or unworried they were about international conflict in the past two weeks, by age group and sex, Great Britain, 6 to 31 May 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.

We also asked respondents which issues, if any, they were worried about because of international conflict. The most commonly selected worries were:

- fuel availability or prices (67%)
- energy supply or prices (66%)
- safety or well-being of those directly affected (61%)
- disruption to travel or transport (39%)

Around 1 in 20 (5%) adults reported that they were not worried about any of these issues.

## **6 . Shortages of goods**

### **Shortages of food and other items**

In the latest period (6 to 31 May 2026), we asked adults what items, if any, they had not been able to buy or access in the past two weeks because they were not available. More than 6 in 10 (63%) adults said that everything they needed had been available in the past two weeks.

Around 1 in 12 (8%) adults reported that in the past two weeks they had been unable to buy or access essential food items that they need on a regular basis, and 15% reported being unable to buy or access other food items.

A smaller proportion of adults reported being unable to buy or access:

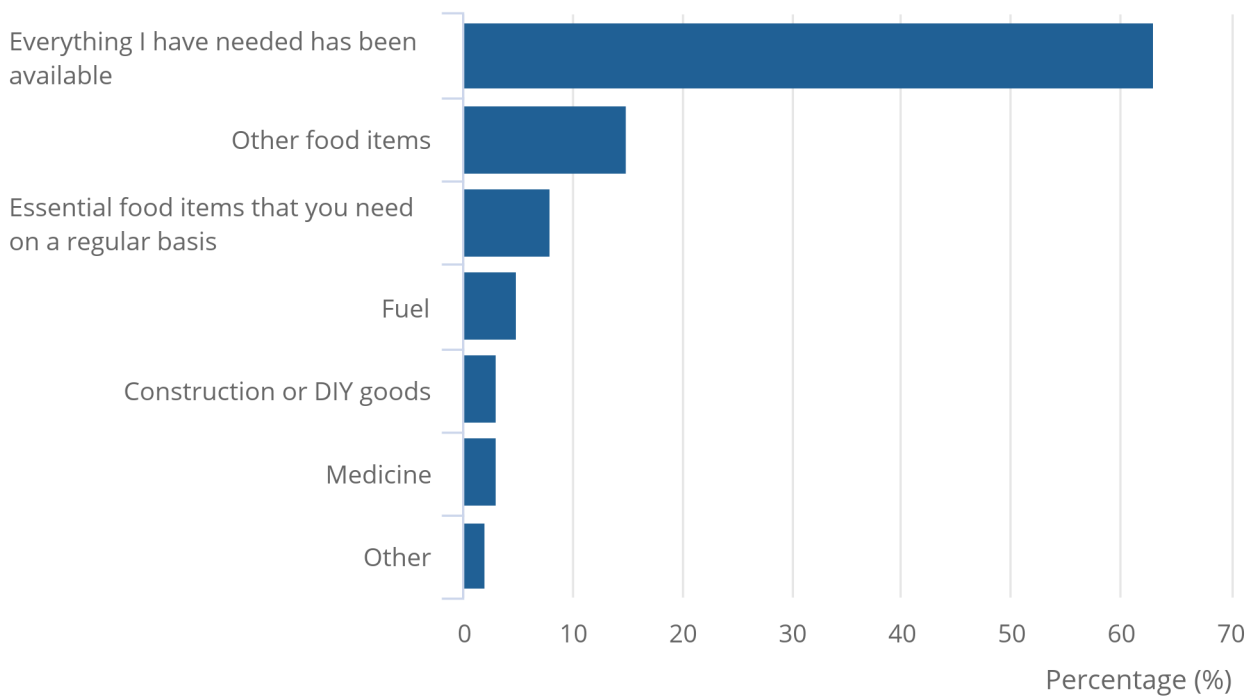
- fuel (5%)
- medicine (3%)
- construction or DIY goods (3%)
- other items (2%)

**Figure 4: The majority of adults (63%) reported that all the items they needed had been available in the past two weeks**

Proportion of adults reporting the items that they had not been able to buy or access, in the past two weeks, as they were not available, Great Britain, 6 to 31 May 2026

Figure 4: The majority of adults (63%) reported that all the items they needed had been available in the past two weeks

Proportion of adults reporting the items that they had not been able to buy or access, in the past two weeks, as they were not available, Great Britain, 6 to 31 May 2026



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

Notes:

1. Respondents could select more than one option.
2. Our accompanying datasets include confidence intervals, additional response options and related footnotes.

## Food availability and variety

We also asked respondents about their experiences when food shopping in the past two weeks.

Over half (53%) of adults reported that they had to spend more than usual in the past two weeks, to purchase what they normally buy. Other reported experiences included:

- there was less variety in the shops than usual (22%)
- having to go to more shops than usual to get what was needed (18%)
- items needed were not available, but a replacement was found (15%)
- items needed were not available and a replacement could not be found (14%)

## 7 . Data on public opinions and social trends

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

Dataset | Released 19 June 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 experiences of shortages of goods](#)

Dataset | Released 19 June 2026

People's experiences of shortages of food and other items when shopping in Great Britain; indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

### [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: household income and subjective poverty](#)

Dataset | Released 19 June 2026

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

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

Dataset | Released 19 June 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: social mobility](#)

Dataset | Released 19 June 2026

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

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

Dataset | Released 19 June 2026

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

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

Dataset | Released 19 June 2026

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

### [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: international travel plans](#)

Dataset | Released 19 June 2026

People's intentions and experiences of international travel; indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

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

Dataset | Released 19 June 2026.

Perceptions of flood risk in Great Britain, and actions taken as a result; indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN). Contains linked data to the Environmental Agency's National Flood Risk Assessment (NaFRA) database.

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

Dataset | Released 19 June 2026

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

## 8 . 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, 6 to 31 May 2026, we sampled 8,770 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 3,780 individuals in the responding sample for the latest period, representing a 43% 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 \(QMI\)](#).

## 9 . Related links

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

Bulletin | Released 15 May 2026

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

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

Online tool | Updated 18 June 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: 18 June 2026](#)

Bulletin | Released 18 June 2026

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

## 10 . Cite this statistical bulletin

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 19 June 2026, ONS website, statistical bulletin, [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: May 2026](#)