

Statistical bulletin

# Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: 7 to 18 December 2022

Social insights on daily life and events, including the cost of living, working arrangements and well-being from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

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# 1 . Main points

The following information is for the latest survey period 7 to 18 December 2022, based on adults in Great Britain.

- When asked about the important issues facing the UK today, the most commonly reported issues continue to be: the cost of living (93%), the NHS (81%), the economy (78%), and climate change and the environment (58%).
- Around 9 in 10 (92%) adults reported their cost of living had increased compared with a year ago, while a lower percentage (76%) reported an increase in their cost of living compared with one month ago.
- Around 6 in 10 (60%) adults reported they were planning on cutting back on the amount of money they spent this Christmas season compared with last year.
- Of adults who reported cutting back their spending over the Christmas season, the most frequently reported ways adults were planning to spend less money were: buying fewer presents (79%), buying less expensive presents (73%), buying less expensive food and drink (62%), eating out less (58%) or buying less food and drink (56%).
- Around 6 in 10 (60%) adults reported that they were worried (very or somewhat) about keeping warm in their home this winter (57% in the previous period from 22 November to 4 December 2022).
- Around a quarter of adults (24%) reported they were occasionally, hardly ever, or never able to keep comfortably warm in their home in the past two weeks (15% occasionally, 8% hardly ever, and 1% never); this is similar to the previous period (14% occasionally, 7% hardly ever, and 1% never).
- The proportion of adults reporting using less fuel such as gas or electricity in their home because of the rising cost of living (56%) decreased compared with the previous period (63%), perhaps reflecting recent colder weather throughout Great Britain.

## 2 . Important issues facing the UK

Estimates in this release are based on data collected between 7 and 18 December 2022 (the "latest period") and 22 November and 4 December 2022 (the "previous period"). Analysis is based on adults in Great Britain.

In the latest period, we asked adults what they feel are important issues facing the UK today (Figure 1). The most commonly reported issues were the same as in the previous period:

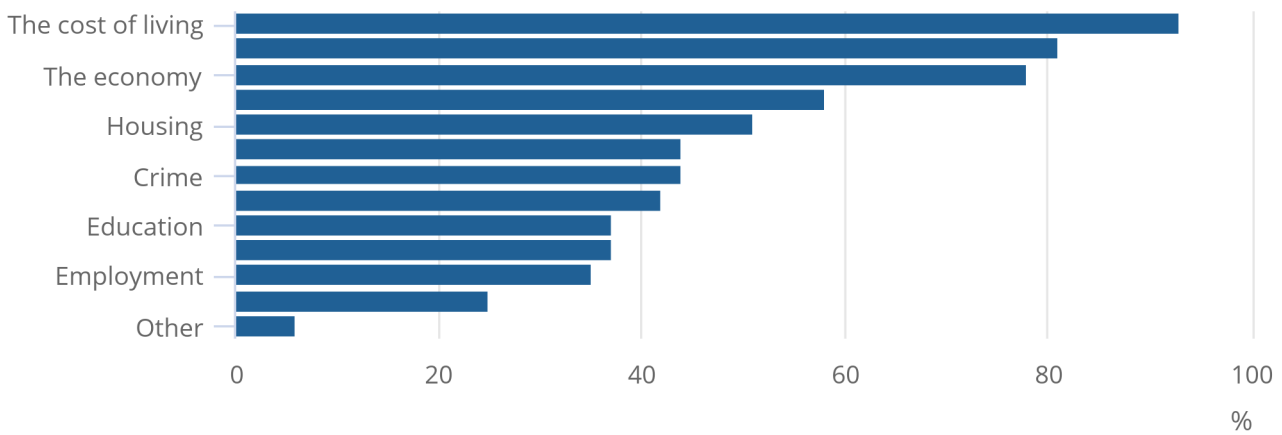
- the cost of living (93%)
- the NHS (81%)
- the economy (78%)
- climate change and the environment (58%)

**Figure 1: Around 9 in 10 (93%) reported the cost of living as an important issue facing the UK today**

Proportion of all adults in Great Britain, 7 to 18 December 2022

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Proportion of all adults in Great Britain, 7 to 18 December 2022



Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS) – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN)

Notes:

1. Question: "What do you think are important issues facing the UK today?"
2. Base: all adults.
3. Respondents were able to choose more than one option.

### 3 . Cost of living

## **Cost of living increases**

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

Around 9 in 10 (92%) reported their cost of living had increased compared with a year ago. Around three-quarters (76%) reported an increase in their cost of living compared with one month ago. This was an increase from 62% when we first asked about this in the period 3 to 14 November 2021.

## **Reasons for cost of living increases**

The most commonly reported reasons given by adults for the rise in their cost of living over the past month remained the same as in the previous period and were increases in:

- the price of food shopping (95%)
- their gas or electricity bills (78%)
- the price of fuel (51%)

## **Actions taken because of this rising cost of living**

The most common actions reported by all adults because of the rising cost of living in the latest period were spending less on non-essentials (67%) and using less fuel such as gas or electricity in their home (56%).

The proportion of adults reporting using less fuel such as gas or electricity in their home had decreased compared with the previous period (63%), perhaps reflecting recent colder weather throughout Great Britain.

However, the proportion of adults reporting this action remains far higher than during a similar period in 2021 (28% in the period 15 December 2021 to 3 January 2022) (Figure 2).

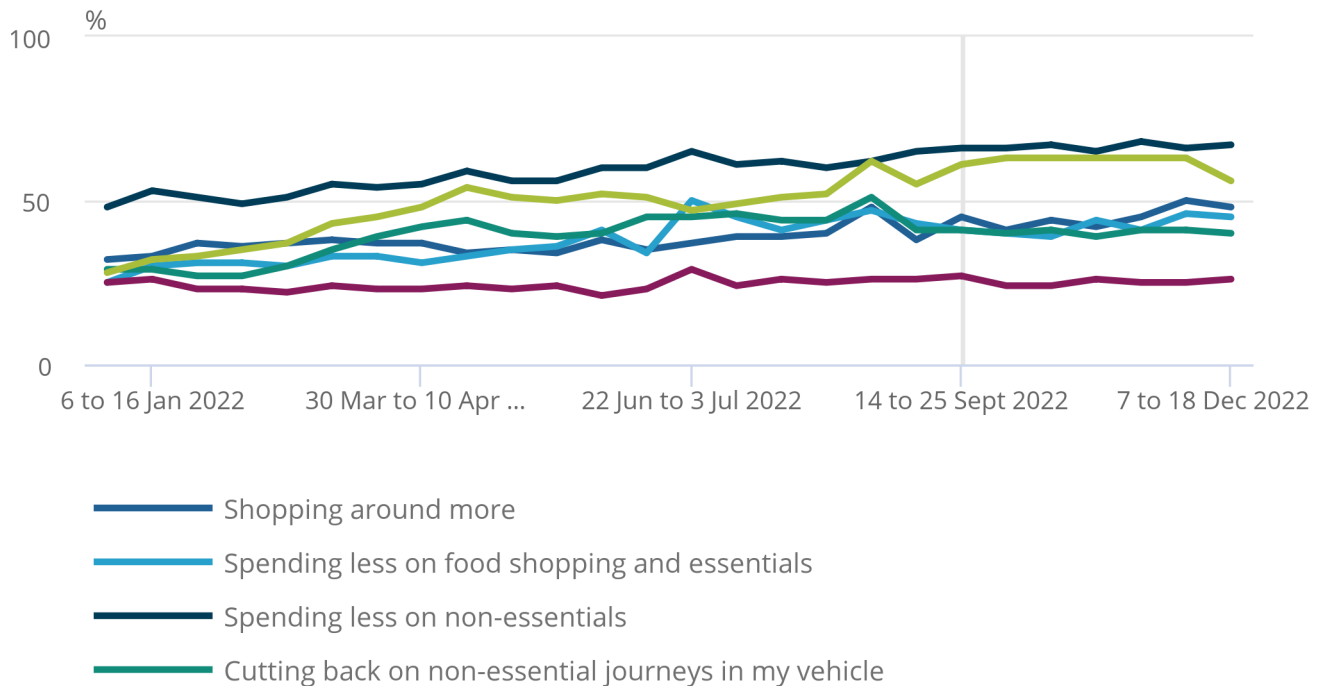
Note there are strong seasonal usage patterns relating to gas and electricity that may affect people's use of fuel gas and electricity even in the absence of energy price increases.

**Figure 2: Taking actions because of increases in the cost of living, such as spending less on non-essentials and using less gas and electricity, has increased during 2022**

Proportion of adults taking actions because of increases in the cost of living, Great Britain, December 2021 to December 2022

Figure 2: Taking actions because of increases in the cost of living, such as spending less on non-essentials and using less gas and electricity, has increased during 2022

Proportion of adults taking actions because of increases in the cost of living, Great Britain, December 2021 to December 2022



Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS) – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN)

Notes:

1. Question: “Which of these, if any, are you doing because of the increases in the cost of living?”.
2. Base: Adults who said their cost of living has increased over the last month until the period 14 to 25 September, from which the base is all adults.
3. Because of changes in the base of the question, there is a break in the time series from the period 14 to 25 September 2022.
4. Respondents were able to choose more than one option.
5. Not all response options are included in this chart. Please see the datasets associated with this release for estimates for each option.

**Christmas spending**

6 in 10 (60%) adults said they were planning on cutting back on the amount of money they spent this Christmas compared with last year.

The most frequently reported ways these adults said they were planning to spend less money this Christmas season were:

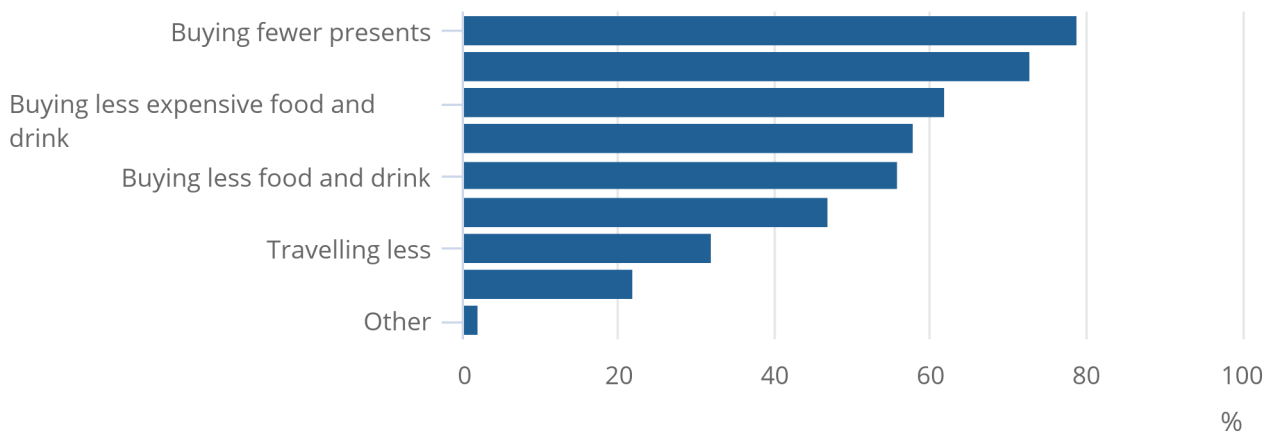
- buying fewer presents (79%)
- buying less expensive presents (73%)
- buying less expensive food and drink (62%)
- eating out less (58%)
- buying less food and drink (56%) (Figure 3)

**Figure 3: Around 8 in 10 (79%) of those who said they were planning on cutting back the amount of money they spent this Christmas season compared with last year said they intended to buy fewer presents**

Proportions among adults who said they were planning on cutting back on the amount of money they spent this Christmas season compared with last year, Great Britain, 7 to 18 December 2022

Figure 3: Around 8 in 10 (79%) of those who said they were planning on cutting back the amount of money they spent this Christmas season compared with last year said they intended to buy fewer presents

Proportions among adults who said they were planning on cutting back on the amount of money they spent this Christmas season compared with last year, Great Britain, 7 to 18 December 2022



Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS) – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN)

Notes:

1. Question: “In what ways are you planning to spend less money this Christmas season?”.
2. Base: Adults who said they were planning on cutting back on the amount of money they spent this Christmas season compared with last year.
3. Respondents were able to choose more than one option.

## Household finances

In this part of the bulletin, we look at various aspects of people's household finances.

In the latest period, around 2 in 10 (18%) adults reported that they did not have any savings (the same as in the previous period). Around 1 in 14 (7%, the same as in the previous period) adults reported that they had a direct debit, a standing order, or bill that they were unable to pay in the past month.

Around 1 in 12 (8%, the same as in the previous period) adults reported that they had cancelled at least one financial product in the past month because of increases in the cost of living. This included 2% of adults reporting cancelling their dental insurance, 1% of adults reporting cancelling either their health, home or life insurance, and 1% their pension payment.

## Energy bills

Around half (47%) of adults who pay energy bills said they found it very or somewhat difficult to afford them in the latest period (48% in the previous period).

Among those who reported they have gas or electricity supplied to their home, around 1 in 25 (4%, the same as in the previous period) reported they were behind on their bills. This proportion has appeared to be relatively stable since we first started asking this question in March 2022.

There are strong seasonal spending patterns relating to gas and electricity that may affect these results. For more information on this and recent price rises for gas and electricity, please see our latest [Consumer price inflation, UK: November 2022](#) data.

## Rent or mortgage payments

Around 3 in 10 (29%) adults who are currently paying rent or mortgage payments reported that these payments have gone up in the last six months (30% in the previous period).

Around 3 in 10 (31%) of those who are currently paying rent or mortgage payments reported that they are finding it very or somewhat difficult to afford these payments (33% in the previous period).

Around 1 in 25 (4%) of those currently paying rent or mortgage payments reported they were behind with these payments (3% in the previous period).

Among adults with a mortgage, over 4 in 10 adults (45%) reported being very or somewhat worried about the changes in mortgage interest rates (43% in the previous period), and around a quarter (27%) reported being somewhat unworried or not at all worried (29% in the previous period).

Our [Impact of increased cost of living on adults across Great Britain: June to September 2022 article](#) explores the impact that increases in the cost of living have had in more detail. It includes the characteristics of adults who are experiencing difficulty affording, or are behind with, their energy bills, mortgage or rent payments.

Our [15 December 2022 article, The impact of winter pressures on adults in Great Britain: December 2022](#) provides further insights on how increases in the cost of living and difficulty accessing NHS services are affecting people's lives during the autumn and winter months.

## 4 . Worries, personal well-being and loneliness

### Keeping warm this winter

In this period, we asked adults how worried they were about keeping warm in their home this winter:



- around 6 in 10 (60%) reported being very or somewhat worried (57% in previous period)
- around one in five (18%) reported being neither worried nor unworried (22% in previous period)
- around one in five (19%) reported being somewhat unworried or not at all worried (18% in previous period)

Around a quarter of adults (24%) reported they were occasionally, hardly ever, or never able to keep comfortably warm in their home in the past two weeks (15% occasionally, 8% hardly ever, and 1% never). This is similar to in the previous period (14% occasionally, 7% hardly ever, and 1% never).

## Worry about cost of living

Around three-quarters (75%) of adults reported being worried (very or somewhat) about rising costs of living in the past two weeks (73% in the previous period).

## Uncertainty about the future

In the latest period, we asked adults how they were feeling about the future in response to the times we are living in now. Around half (50%) of all adults reported they were unsure (very or fairly) of the future. This is similar to the last time we asked this question in the period 8 to 20 November 2022 (49%).

## Personal well-being

This period, we continued to ask respondents about their personal well-being. The average level of anxiety appeared to improve in the latest period:

- life satisfaction: 6.9 in the latest period (6.8 the previous period)
- feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile: 7.3 in the latest period (7.2 in the previous period)
- happiness: 7.1 in the latest period (6.8 in the previous period)
- anxiety: 3.9 in the latest period (4.2 in the previous period)

Our [Personal well-being quarterly estimates technical report](#) provides more information on the seasonal variation associated with measures of personal well-being. You can learn more about the Measures of National Well-being from our [Quality of life in the UK: November 2022 bulletin](#) and [Measures of National Well-being dashboard](#).

## Figure 4: Levels of personal well-being

Adults in Great Britain, March 2020 to December 2022

### Notes:

1. Questions included: "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".
3. Base: all adults.

### Download the data

[.xlsx](#)

## Loneliness

Around one in five (22%) adults reported feeling lonely always, often, or some of the time in the latest period (26% in the previous period).

For further estimates on people's personal well-being and loneliness, including breakdowns by age, sex and trends over time, please see our [Personal well-being and loneliness dataset](#).

## 5 . Working arrangements

### Location of work

Around 7 in 10 (70%) working adults travelled to work at some point in the past seven days (73% in the previous period). This includes:

- 47% who only travelled to work in the past seven days (48% in the previous period)
- 24% who reported both working from home and travelling to work (hybrid working) in the past seven days (25% in the previous period)

Around 15% of working adults said they worked from home exclusively in the past seven days (13% in the previous period). A further 15% neither travelled to work nor worked from home (14% in the previous period).

## 6 . Actions taken to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and other illnesses

Estimates regarding the actions taken to reduce the spread and the social impacts of coronavirus (COVID-19) and other illnesses, with trends over time and breakdowns by age and sex, can be found in our [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) and other illnesses dataset](#).

The latest available estimates cover the period 8 November to 20 November 2022. An update to these estimates will be available in early 2023.

### More about coronavirus

- Find the latest on [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) in the UK](#).
- [Explore the latest coronavirus data](#) from the ONS and other sources.
- View [all coronavirus data](#).
- Find out how we are [working safely in our studies and surveys](#).

## 7 . Public opinions and social trends data

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

Dataset | Released 23 December 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 23 December 2022

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) of worries, personal well-being and loneliness in Great Britain.

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

Dataset | Released 23 December 2022

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: personal experiences of shortages of goods](#)

Dataset | Released 23 December 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.

## 8 . 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).

Breakdowns by age and sex, including [confidence intervals](#) for the estimates, are contained in our [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain datasets](#).

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

### Sampling and weighting

In the latest period (7 to 18 December 2022), we sampled 4,935 households. This sample was randomly selected from those who had previously completed the Labour Market Survey (LMS) or OPN. The responding sample for the latest period contained 2,236 individuals, representing a 45% response rate.

Survey weights were applied to make estimates representative of the population (based on ONS population estimates). 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

### [The impact of winter pressures on adults in Great Britain: December 2022](#)

Article | Released 15 December 2022

First insights from our new winter survey providing monthly updates on how increases in the cost of living and difficulty accessing NHS services are impacting people's lives during the autumn and winter months.

### [Cost of living insights](#)

Web page | Updated frequently

A live roundup of the latest data and trends about the cost of living. Explore changes to the cost of everyday items and how this is affecting people.

### [Impact of increased cost of living on adults across Great Britain: June to September 2022](#)

Article | Released 25 October 2022

Analysis of the proportion of the population that is affected by an increase in their cost of living, and of the characteristics associated with having difficulty affording or being behind on energy, mortgage or rental payments, using data from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey.

### [Cost of living and depression in adults, Great Britain: 29 September to 23 October 2022](#)

Article | Released 6 December 2022

Analysis into the prevalence of depression among adults in Great Britain in autumn 2022. Exploring this in the context of the rising cost of living.

### [Quality of life in the UK: November 2022](#)

Bulletin | Released 11 November 2022

An update on UK's progress across 10 domains of national well-being: personal well-being, relationships, health, what we do, where we live, personal finance, economy, education and skills, governance, and the environment.

### [Cost of living and higher education students, England: 24 October to 7 November 2022](#)

Bulletin | Released 23 November 2022

Experimental statistics on the behaviours, plans, opinions and well-being of students related to the cost of living. From the Student Cost of Living Insights Study (SCoLIS).

### [COVID-19 question bank](#)

Web page | Updated frequently

Government Statistical Service page that provides a bank of questions from multiple Office for National Statistics (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 ONS has in relation to the coronavirus pandemic.

## 10 . Cite this statistical bulletin

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