

Statistical bulletin

Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: 11 to 22 January 2023

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

Contact:
Hannah White, Katie Hendry,
Rhian Murphy, Tim Vizard
policy.evidence.analysis@ons.
gov.uk
+44 3000 671543

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1 . Main points

The following information is for the latest survey period 11 to 22 January 2023, 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 (89%), the economy (76%), and climate change and the environment (59%).
- Around 9 in 10 (92%) adults reported their cost of living had increased compared with a year ago, while a lower percentage (67%) reported an increase in their cost of living compared with one month ago.
- Around half (51%) of adults reported that they were worried (very or somewhat) about keeping warm in their home this winter (53% in the previous period from 21 December 2022 to 8 January 2023).
- Just over three in five (62%) adults reported turning down their thermostat temperature at home, 48% turned radiators off in unused rooms, while 45% turned down radiators to reduce energy use in the last month.
- The most common actions reported by adults because of the rising cost of living were spending less on non-essentials (66%), and using less fuel, such as gas or electricity, in their homes (59%), similar to the previous period.
- Around one in five (19%) adults reported their travel plans had been disrupted by rail strikes in the past two weeks.
- Between 7 to 18 December 2022 we asked working adults, with children in school, how their work would be affected by school closures caused by industrial action; around 3 in 10 (31%) reported they would have to work fewer hours, 28% reported that they would not be able to work, and the remaining 41% said their work would not be affected.

2 . Important issues facing the UK

Estimates in this release are based on data collected between 11 and 22 January 2023 (the "latest period") and 21 December 2022 and 8 January 2023 (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:

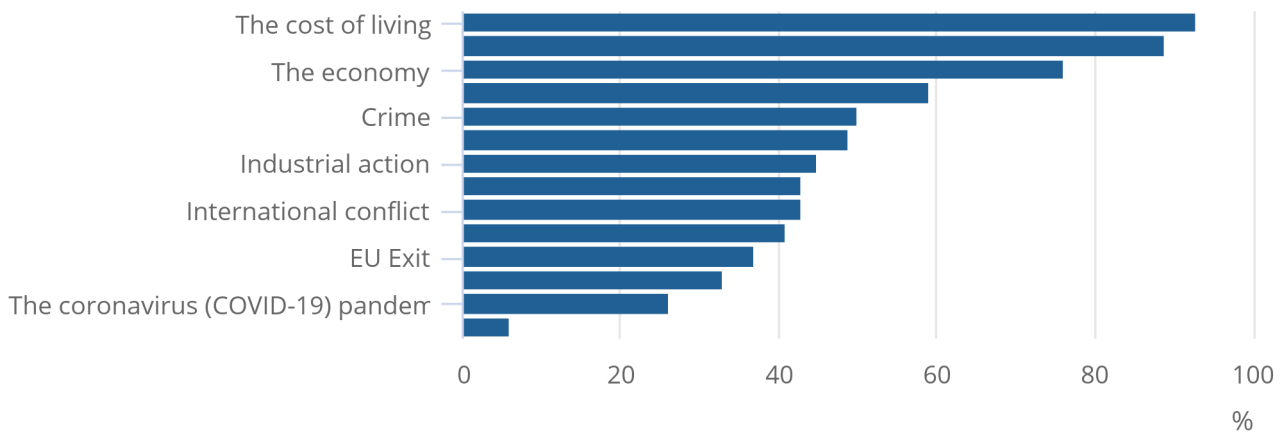
- the cost of living (93%)
- the NHS (89%)
- the economy (76%)
- climate change and the environment (59%)

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, 11 to 22 January 2023

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Proportion of all adults in Great Britain, 11 to 22 January 2023



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.

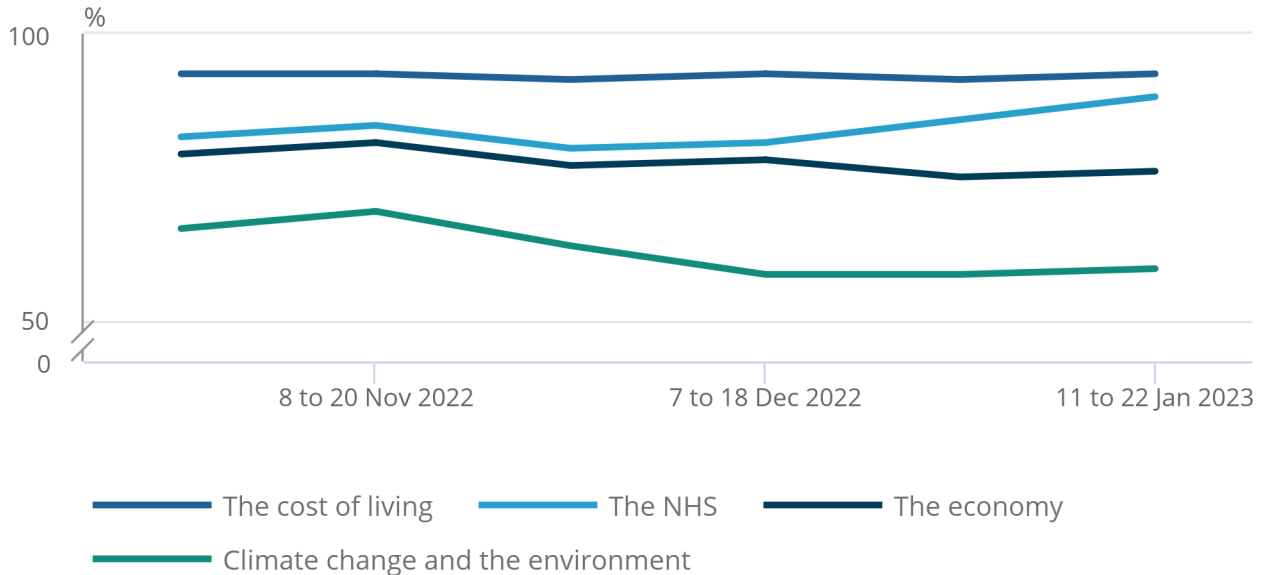
Looking at the four most common options, most remained consistent with the previous period (Figure 2). However, there has been an increase, from 81%, in the proportion of adults reporting the NHS as an important issue since a similar period a month ago (7 to 18 December 2022).

Figure 2: The proportion of adults reporting the NHS as an important issue has increased over the last month

Proportion of all adults in Great Britain, 11 to 22 January 2023

Figure 2: The proportion of adults reporting the NHS as an important issue has increased over the last month

Proportion of all adults in Great Britain, 11 to 22 January 2023



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. Compared with one month ago, 67% reported an increase in their cost of living, a decrease from the previous period (71%). However, this is 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 (94%)
- their gas or electricity bills (74%)
- the price of fuel (41%)

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 (66%) and using less fuel such as gas or electricity in their home (59%). This is similar to the previous period (65% and 59%, respectively).

In the latest period, more adults reported shopping around more (48%) and spending less on food shopping and essentials (46%), than in the previous period (44% and 41% respectively).

Adults were also taking more actions in response to the rising cost of living than at a similar point a year ago. The proportion of adults reporting these actions remains far higher than during the period 6 to 16 January 2022 (33% and 30%, respectively) (Figure 3).

In the latest period, 23% of adults reported they were using their savings, compared with 26% in the previous period. The last time this was as low as 23% was during the period 8 to 19 June 2022.

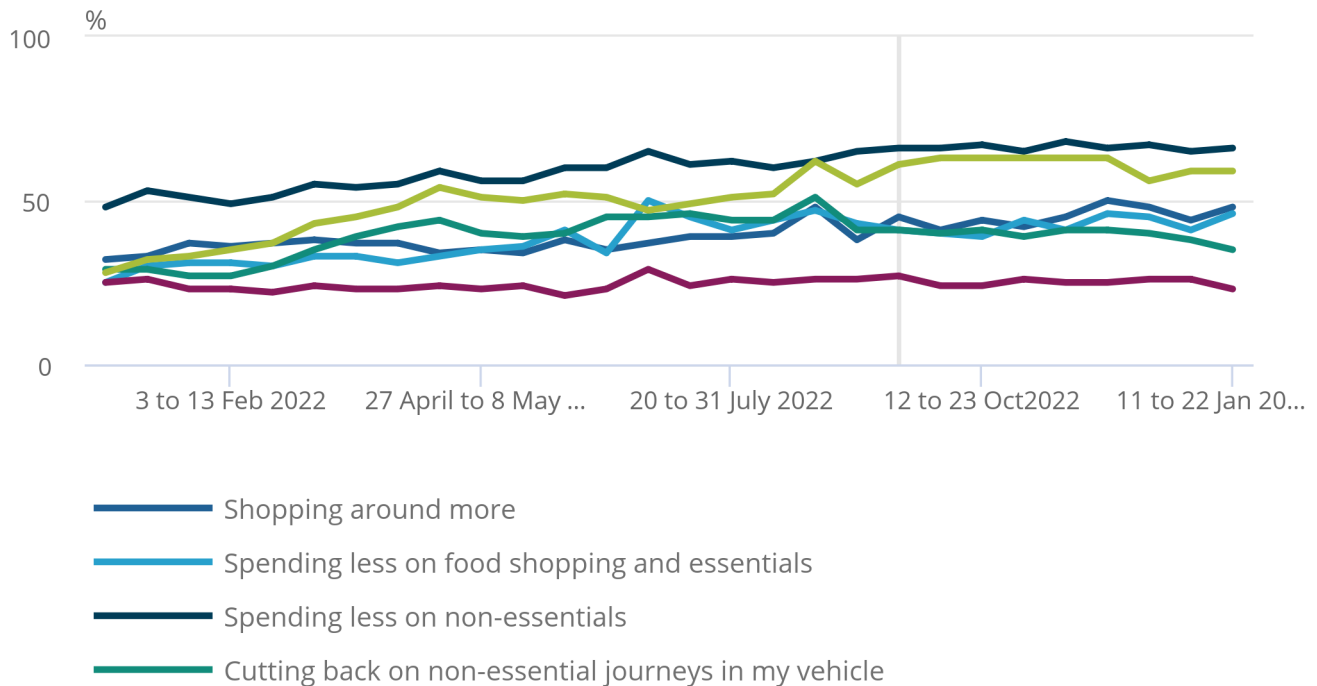
Having peaked as a cost-saving measure in August 2022 (51%), the action of cutting back on non-essential journeys in vehicles has continued to decrease, with 35% of adults reporting this during this period. The decrease can be further supported by the further ease in motor fuel inflation in December 2022, as reported on our [Cost of Living Insights webpage](#). The summer peak could be explained by the fall in sales of fuel during the heatwave in July 2022, as shown in our [Retail sales, Great Britain: July 2022 bulletin](#).

Figure 3: The proportion of people shopping around more and spending less on food shopping increased to similar proportions as before the Christmas season

Proportion of adults taking actions because of increases in the cost of living, Great Britain, December 2021 to January 2023

Figure 3: The proportion of people shopping around more and spending less on food shopping increased to similar proportions as before the Christmas season

Proportion of adults taking actions because of increases in the cost of living, Great Britain, December 2021 to January 2023



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.

Worry about cost of living

Around three-quarters (73%) of adults reported being worried (very or somewhat) about rising costs of living in the past two weeks (74% in the previous period).

Keeping warm this winter

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

- around half (51%) reported being very or somewhat worried (53% in the previous period)
- around a quarter (26%) reported being neither worried nor unworried (23% in the previous period)
- around one in five (21%) reported being somewhat unworried or not at all worried (22% in the previous period)

The level of worry during the latest and previous period may have been because of [cold weather alerts \(explained in this GOV.UK article\)](#).

Household finances

In the latest period, around one in six (16%) adults reported that they did not have savings (16% in the previous period). Around 1 in 14 (7%) adults reported that they had a direct debit, a standing order, or bill that they were unable to pay in the past month (8% in the previous period).

Energy bills

Just under half (46%) of adults who pay energy bills said they found it very or somewhat difficult to afford them in the latest period (46% in the previous period).

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 release](#).

Actions taken to reduce energy use

We asked adults what actions, if any, they had taken to reduce their energy use. Just over three in five (62%) adults had reported turning down their thermostat temperature at home in the last month (56% reported they had been doing this for over a month). Just under half (48%) reported turning radiators off in unused rooms, while 45% of adults reported turning down radiators. Most adults reported they had taken action with only 13% reporting none of the actions applied to them.

Rent or mortgage payments

Around 3 in 10 (31%) adults who are currently making rent or mortgage payments reported that these payments have gone up in the last six months (29% in the previous period).

Of those who are currently making rent or mortgage payments, 30% reported that they are finding it very or somewhat difficult to afford these payments (28% in the previous period).

Our 9 January 2023 release [How increases in housing costs impact households](#) looks at how increasing interest rates and rental costs will affect mortgage holders and renters in 2023.

4 . Personal well-being and loneliness

Personal well-being

This period, we continued to ask respondents about their personal well-being. Average levels of personal well-being were:

- life satisfaction: 6.8 in the latest period (6.9 the previous period)
- feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile: 7.2 in the latest period (7.2 in the previous period)
- happiness: 6.8 in the latest period (6.9 in the previous period)
- anxiety: 4.1 in the latest period (3.9 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 our [Measures of National Well-being dashboard](#).

Figure 4: Levels of personal well-being

Adults in Great Britain, March 2020 to January 2023

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

A quarter (25%) of adults reported feeling lonely always, often, or some of the time in the latest period (27% in the previous period). This compares to 23% who reported this in the period 7 to 18 December 2022.

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

The proportion of working adults who travelled to work at some point in the past seven days increased to 68% (49% in the previous period). Usual work and work location patterns may have been affected by Christmas and New Year holidays during the previous period.

This includes:

- 43% who only travelled to work in the past seven days (36% in the previous period)
- 25% who reported both working from home and travelling to work (hybrid working) in the past seven days (13% in the previous period)

Around 14% of working adults said they worked from home exclusively in the past seven days (15% in the previous period). A further 18% neither travelled to work nor worked from home (35% in the previous period).

Industrial Action

In the latest period, 45% of adults reported industrial action as an important issue in the UK today.

We continued to ask adults about the impact of rail strikes. Around one in five (19%) said their travel plans had been disrupted by rail strikes in the past two weeks. This compares with 18% reporting this during the previous period and 15% when we first asked the questions between 22 June to 3 July 2022, during a previous wave of industrial action.

Among those who reported that rail strikes had disrupted their travel plans, around half (49%) said this disruption affected their ability to take part in leisure activities (49% in the previous period). In addition, around a quarter (24%) reported they had spent more on travel as a result of the strikes (27% in the previous period).

Fewer adults reported that the strikes had caused disruption to their ability to work (8%), however this is compared with 5% in the previous period and 2% when compared with 22 June to 3 July 2022.

School Strikes

During the period from [7 to 18 December 2022](#), we asked among those who said they were working and had a child in a primary or secondary school, how their own work would be affected if schools closed because of strike action.

Around two in five (41%) said their work would not be affected. This compared with 31% who reported they would have to work fewer hours and 28% who reported that they would not be able to work (Figure 5).

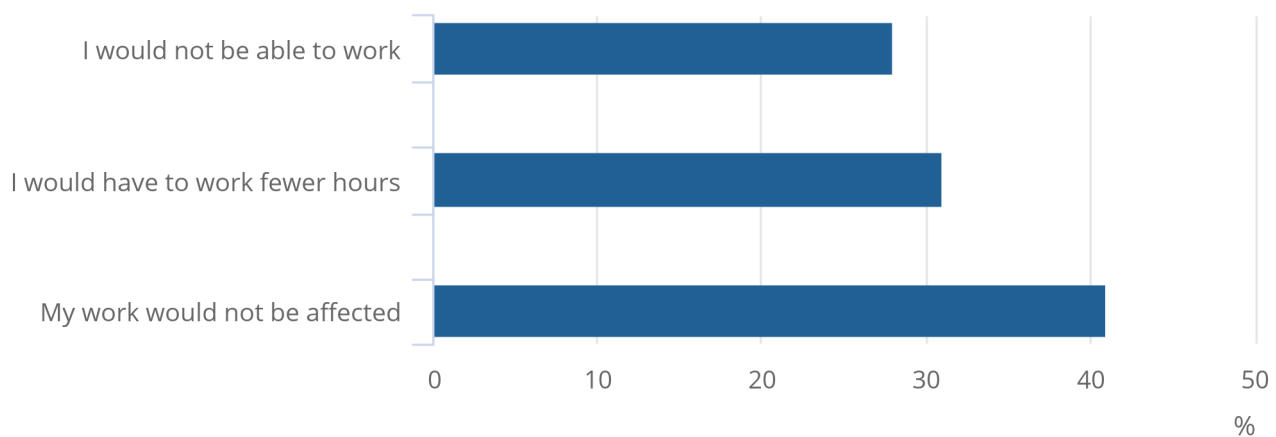
There did appear to be differences between men and women although these were not significant. While 35% of women stated they would not be able to work compared with 20% of men, two in five men (40%) reported they would have to work fewer hours, compared with 24% of women.

Figure 5: Over half of working adults with children in school said that their work would be affected if teachers were to strike

Proportion of adults who said they were working and had a child or children in primary or secondary school in Great Britain, 7 to 18 December 2022

Figure 5: Over half of working adults with children in school said that their work would be affected if teachers were to strike

Proportion of adults who said they were working and had a child or children in primary or secondary school in Great Britain, 7 to 18 December 2022



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

Notes:

1. Question: If the school your child or children attend is closed because of strike action, to what extent, if any, would your work be affected?
2. Base: Among those who said they were working and had a child or children in primary or secondary school.

6 . Public opinions and social trends data

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

Dataset | Released 27 January 2023

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 27 January 2023

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 27 January 2023

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 27 January 2023

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.

[Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: travel to work and rail disruptions](#)

Dataset | Released 27 January 2023

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) of travel to work methods and travel disruptions in Great Britain.

7 . 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 (11 to 22 January 2023), we sampled 4,968 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 2,825 individuals, representing a 57% 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 \(QMI\)](#).

8 . 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.

[How increases in housing costs impact households](#)

Article | Released 9 January 2023

Mortgage interest rates started to increase during 2022, this is likely to make borrowing more expensive for those with fixed rates deals coming to an end in 2023. Those with variable rate mortgages and private renters are also facing higher housing costs.

[Census 2021: how homes are heated in your area](#)

Article | Released 5 January 2023

As more than half of adults report worry about keeping warm this winter, we explore how homes are heated across England and Wales.

[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.

[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.

9 . Cite this statistical bulletin

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