

Statistical bulletin

Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: 8 to 19 February 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).

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1 . Main points

The following information is for the latest survey period 8 to 19 February 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 (91%), the NHS (85%), the economy (74%), and climate change and the environment (58%).
- Around 1 in 30 (3%) working adults reported that they missed work because of industrial action when thinking of the past seven days at the time of completing the survey (between 8 to 19 February); this includes those taking part in industrial action, as well as those affected by industrial action.
- Around half (49%) of adults reported that they were worried (very or somewhat) about keeping warm in their home this winter (56% in the period when we first asked the question at the start of winter from 26 October to 6 November 2022).
- The most common action reported by adults because of the rising cost of living was spending less on non-essentials (65%); a decrease from the 69% reported last period.
- A quarter of adults (25%) reported that they could not find a replacement when the items they needed were not available when food shopping in the past two weeks; an increase from the 15% in a similar period a year ago (3 to 13 February 2022).

2 . Important issues facing the UK

Estimates in this release are based on data collected between 8 and 19 February 2023 (the "latest period") and 25 January and 5 February 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:

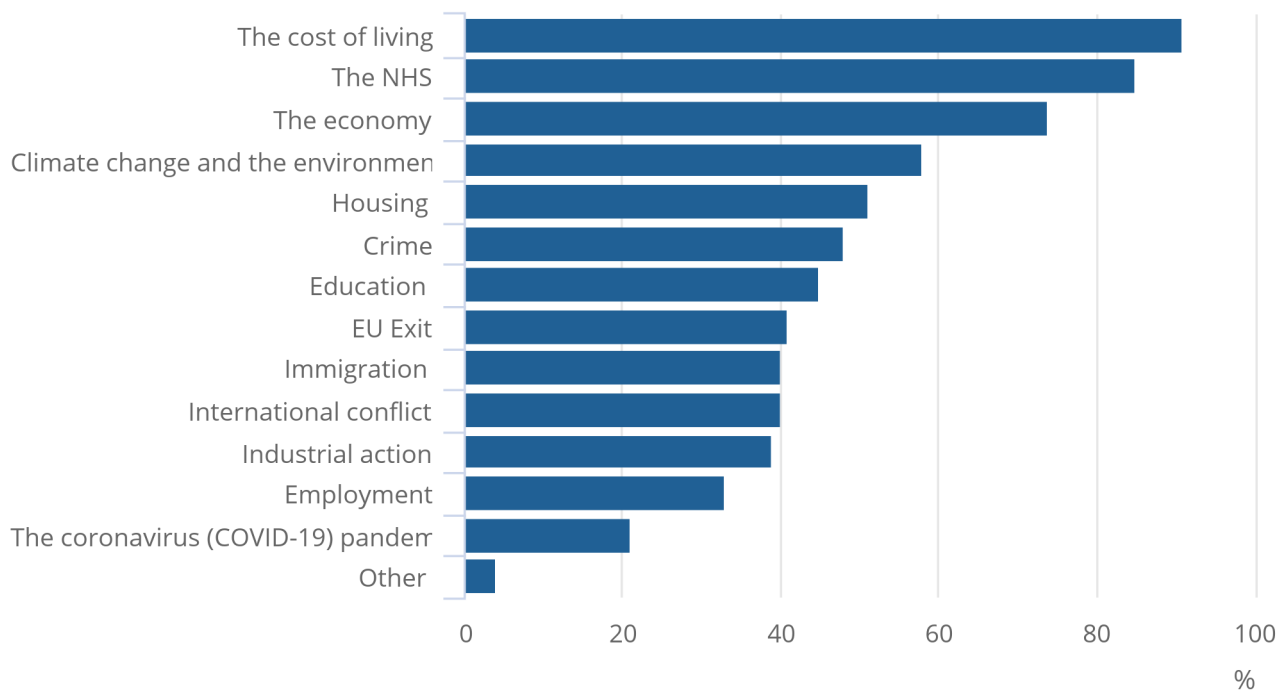
- the cost of living (91%)
- the NHS (85%)
- the economy (74%)
- climate change and the environment (58%)

Figure 1: Around 9 in 10 (91%) reported the cost of living as an important issue facing the UK today

Proportion of all adults in Great Britain, 8 to 19 February 2023

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Proportion of all adults in Great Britain, 8 to 19 February 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.

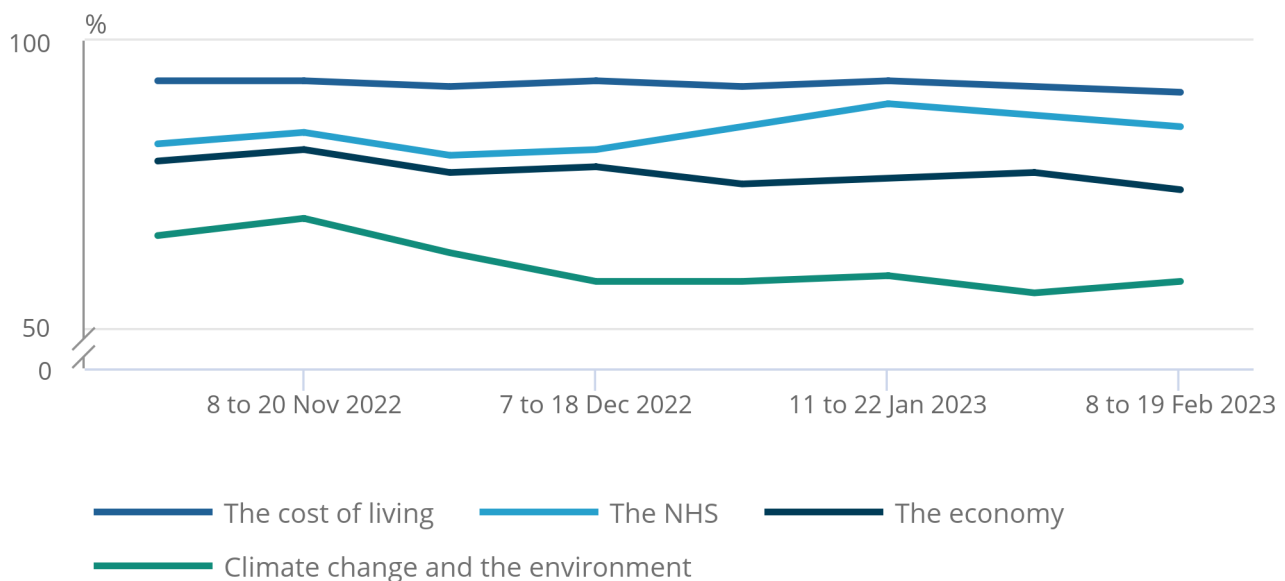
Looking at the four most common options, the majority appeared to be similar to previous weeks with some slight changes (Figure 2). There has been a general decrease in adults reporting the economy as an important issue, from 79% when we started asking the question in the period 26 October to 6 November 2022 to 74% in the current period.

Figure 2: The cost of living and the NHS continue to be the most commonly reported important issue

Proportion of all adults in Great Britain, 8 to 19 February 2023

Figure 2: The cost of living and the NHS continue to be the most commonly reported important issue

Proportion of all adults in Great Britain, 8 to 19 February 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.

Over 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, similar to the previous period (69%). This still represents 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 (79%)
- the price of fuel (45%)

Actions taken because of the rising cost of living

The most common action reported by all adults because of the rising cost of living in the latest period was spending less on non-essentials (65%). This is a decrease from the previous period (69%).

The next most common action reported by adults was using less fuel such as gas or electricity in their home (57%). This was 60% in the previous period.

In line with the previous period, adults also reported shopping around more (47%) and spending less on food shopping and essentials (43%) because of the rising cost of living (48% and 44%, respectively, in the previous period).

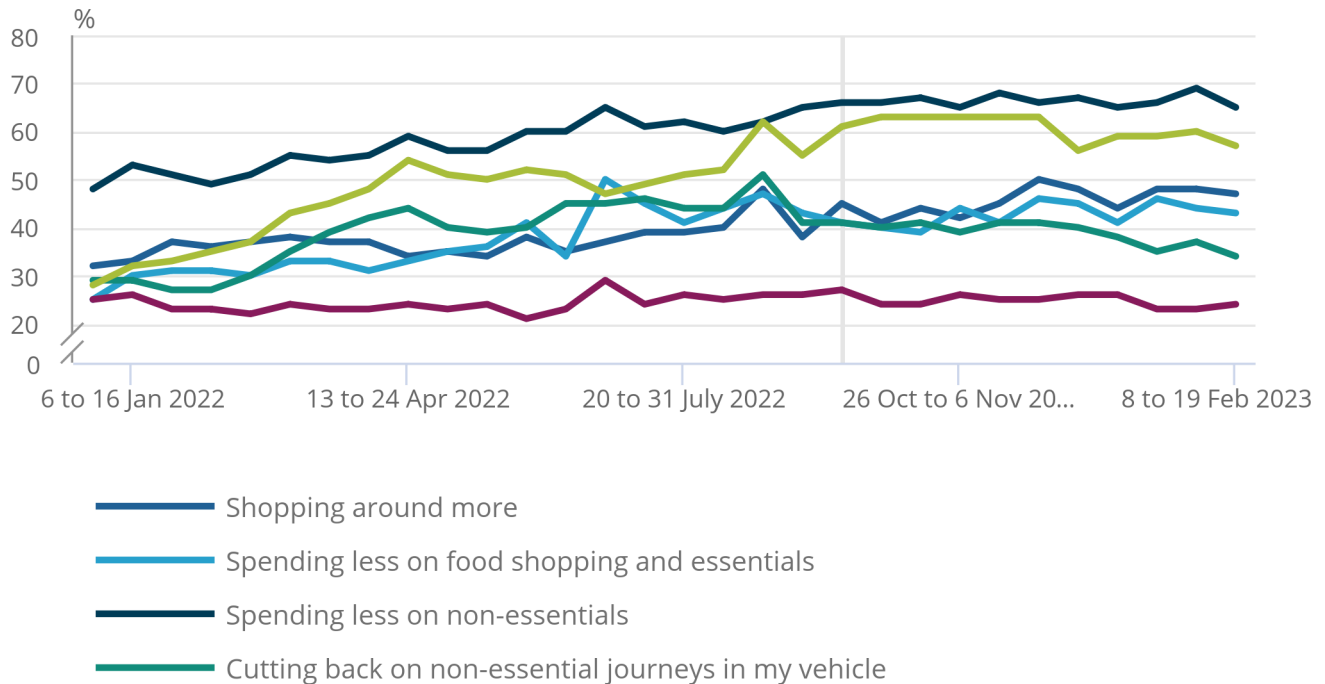
We found that people living in the most-deprived fifth of areas in England more frequently reported spending less on food shopping and essentials (61%) compared with those living in the least-deprived fifth of areas in England (42%).

Figure 3: Cutting back on non-essential journeys was the lowest it has been since February last year

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

Figure 3: Cutting back on non-essential journeys was the lowest it has been since February last year

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

Personal experiences of shortages of goods

In this period, a quarter of adults (25%) reported that they could not find a replacement when the items they needed were not available when food shopping in the past two weeks. This proportion has increased from 15% in a similar period a year ago (3 to 13 February 2022).

Nearly 2 in 10 (18%) adults experienced shortages of essential food items that were needed on a regular basis in the past two weeks; this has seen a general increase over the year, which was at 13% in a similar period a year ago (3 to 13 February 2022).

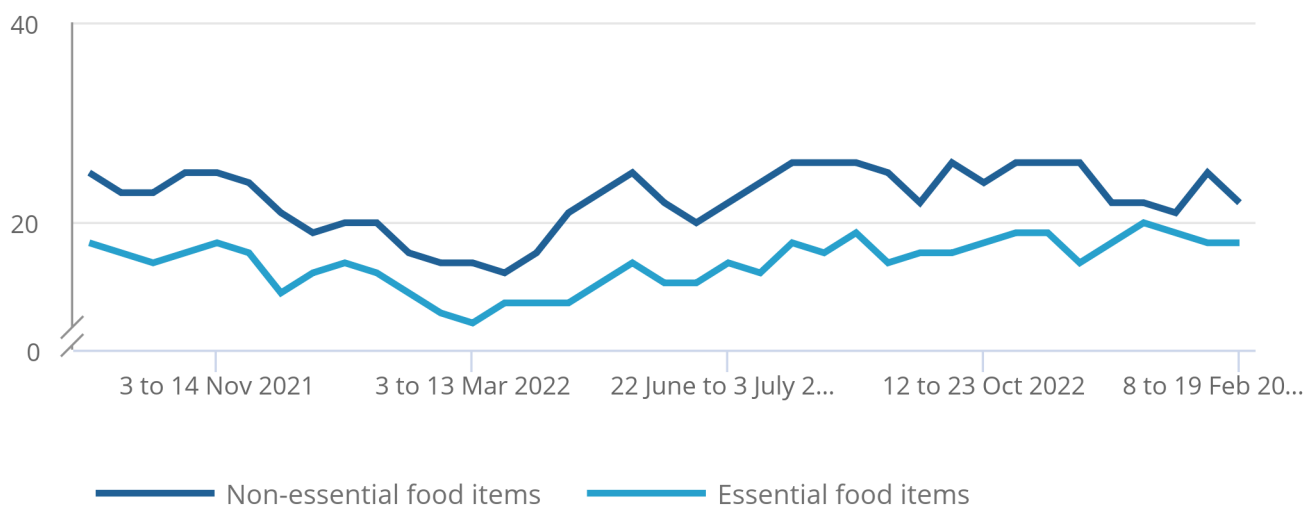
Just over 2 in 10 (22%) adults experienced shortages of other (non-essential) food items in the past two weeks. This was at 25% when we first asked the question between 8 and 19 September 2021. Since September 2021, the proportion of people reporting this generally decreased to reach its lowest point between 16 to 27 March 2022, at 15%. Since March 2022, the proportion has seen a general increase to its current level.

Figure 4: The proportion of people experiencing shortages of food items has generally increased since March 2022

Proportion of all adults in Great Britain, September 2021 to February 2023

Figure 4: The proportion of people experiencing shortages of food items has generally increased since March 2022

Proportion of all adults in Great Britain, September 2021 to February 2023



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

Notes:

1. Question: "In the past two weeks, which of these things, if any, have you not been able to buy as they were not available?"
2. Base: all adults.
3. Respondents were able to choose more than one option.

Keeping warm this winter

We continued to ask adults how worried they were about keeping warm in their home this winter.

A higher proportion of people reported being very or somewhat worried when we first asked the question at the start of winter (26 October to 6 November 2022).

In this period:

- around half (49%) reported being very or somewhat worried (compared with 56% between 26 October to 6 November 2022)
- around a quarter (26%) reported being neither worried nor unworried (compared with 24%)
- around one in four (22%) reported being somewhat unworried or not at all worried (compared with 17%)

Household finances

In the latest period, around one in six (18%) 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 (7% in the previous period). This increased to around one in five (19%) for the most-deprived areas of England compared with 1 in 50 for the least-deprived areas of England (2%).

Our [Impact of increased cost of living on adults across Great Britain: September 2022 to January 2023](#) article found that adults with a personal annual income of £10,000 up to £15,000 had the highest odds of experiencing some form of financial vulnerability (4.3 higher odds), compared with adults earning £50,000 or more per year.

Energy

Just under half (48%) of adults who pay energy bills said they found it very or somewhat difficult to afford them in the latest period (47% in the previous period). However, this was higher among those in the most-deprived areas in England (64%) compared with the least-deprived areas (35%).

People in the most-deprived areas were more likely to report being behind on their energy bills (12%) compared with the least-deprived areas (3%).

We also asked what actions people had taken to cut down their energy use over the last month and found that:

- three in five (60%) had turned down the thermostat in their house
- just under half (47%) reported turning radiators off in unused rooms
- over 4 in 10 (44%) adults reported turning down radiators

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: January 2023 data release](#).

Rent or mortgage payments

Around one in four (27%) adults who are currently making rent or mortgage payments reported that these payments have gone up in the last six months (31% in the previous period).

Of those who are currently making rent or mortgage payments, around a third of people (33%) reported that they are finding it very or somewhat difficult to afford these payments (30% in the previous period).

Our 9 January 2023 release [How increases in housing costs impact households](#) found an estimated 1.4 million households were due to renew fixed-rate mortgages during 2023 and likely to experience an increase to their mortgage interest rate.

4 . Personal well-being

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

- life satisfaction: 6.9 in the latest period (6.8 in 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: 7.0 in the latest period (6.9 in the previous period)
- anxiety: 3.9 in the latest period (4.0 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: February 2023 bulletin](#) and our [Measures of National Well-being dashboard](#), which provides longer-term trends in well-being since 2012.

Our [Debt and wellbeing in Great Britain: September 2022 to January 2023 article](#) looks at how the impacts of debt and financial pressures effect personal well-being, finding those reporting being behind on their energy bills, or using more credit than usual, had lower levels of personal well-being.

Figure 5: Levels of personal well-being

Adults in Great Britain, March 2020 to February 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](#)

5 . Industrial action and its impact on work

In the latest period, 39% of adults reported industrial action as an important issue in the UK today.

A higher proportion in the older age groups reported this being an important issue, with 44% of people aged 50 to 69 years and 49% of those age 70 years and over reporting this. This is compared with 30% for those aged 16 to 29 years and 35% for those aged 30 to 49 years.

During this period, we again asked a question about whether people had missed work because of industrial action in the past seven days.

We found that around 1 in 30 (3%) working adults said that they had missed work because of industrial action (unchanged from the previous period). This includes those taking part in industrial action, as well as those affected by industrial action.

Train strikes

In the past two weeks, around 1 in 10 people (11%) reported being disrupted by rail strikes. Of these disruptions:

- 7% reported being unable to work
- 17% reported being unable to work the hours they planned to
- 45% reported being unable to take part in leisure activities

6 . Public opinions and social trends data

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

Dataset | Released 24 February 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 24 February 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 24 February 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 24 February 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: industrial action](#)

Dataset | Released 24 February 2023

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) on experiences of industrial action on adults 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 (8 to 19 February 2023), we sampled 4,969 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 2,618 individuals, representing a 53% 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 different population groups in Great Britain: 22 November to 18 December 2022](#)

Article | Released 30 January 2023

Latest 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.

[Characteristics of adults experiencing energy and food insecurity in Great Britain: 22 November to 18 December 2022](#)

Article | Released 13 February 2023

Understanding the characteristics associated with experiencing energy and food insecurity; logistic regression analysis using data from the Winter Survey.

[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.

[Impact of increased cost of living on adults across Great Britain: September 2022 to January 2023](#)

Article | Released 20 February 2023

Analysis of the proportion of the population that are affected by an increase in their cost of living, and of the characteristics associated with financial vulnerability, 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: February 2023](#)

Bulletin | Released 10 February 2023

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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