Statistical bulletin

Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: December 2024

Social insights on daily life and events, including opinions of Big Tech companies, attitudes to important issues and experiences of financial pressures and healthcare, from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

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Next release:
To be announced

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1 . Main points

The following information is from data collected from 4 December 2024 to 5 January 2025, based on adults in Great Britain. For the first time, we asked people for their opinions of Big Tech companies:

- Around 1 in 2 adults (47%) reported that they have no or low trust in Big Tech companies; 1 in 4 (25%) had high or moderately high trust.
- Similar proportions of adults agreed (27%) and disagreed (27%) that Big Tech companies will benefit them; almost half (46%) neither agreed nor disagreed.
- Healthcare (58%), education (57%), defence (42%) and transport (40%) were the public services people thought Big Tech companies could have the most impact on; 22% reported that they did not think Big Tech companies could have any impact on public services.

Other questions included attitudes to important issues, finances and health:

- When asked about the important issues facing the UK today, the most commonly reported issues were the NHS (88%), the cost of living (86%), the economy (72%), crime (62%), immigration (61%), climate change and the environment (60%) and housing (60%).
- Around 1 in 6 (16%) adults reported occasionally, hardly ever or never keeping comfortably warm in their home in the past two weeks.
- Around 3 in 10 (30%) adults who pay rent or mortgage payments reported that they find it very or somewhat difficult to afford to afford those payments; a similar proportion of adults (32%) reported finding it very or somewhat difficult to afford their energy bills.
- Among the 15% of adults in Great Britain who told us they were currently on an NHS hospital waiting list, over 1 in 3 (36%) rated their overall experience of waiting as very poor or poor.

In this release, the proportion of respondents on an NHS hospital waiting list refers to adults in Great Britain who self-report being on a hospital waiting list in the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey. The percentage may therefore differ from other sources.

2 . Important issues facing the UK

In the latest period (4 December 2024 to 5 January 2025), the NHS (88%) and the cost of living (86%) remain the two most-reported important issues facing the UK (Figure 1).

While reporting the NHS as an important issue has remained relatively stable since we first started asking the question in October 2022, the proportion reporting the cost of living as an important issue has decreased slightly (from 93% in October 2022 to 86% in the latest period), as has the proportion reporting the economy (from 79% in October 2022 to 72% in the latest period).

Climate change and the environment, as well as housing, have remained stable as important issues facing the UK since October 2022, with both topics having 60% of all adults reporting this in the latest period.

By contrast, the proportion of adults reporting crime (62%) and immigration (61%) as important issues has increased compared with October 2022, when these proportions were 49% and 43%, respectively.

Figure 1: The NHS, the cost of living, 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 January 2025

Notes

1. Question: "What do you think are important issues facing the UK today?".
2. Base: All adults.
3. Respondents could select more than one option. Estimates and associated confidence intervals for all response categories are provided in the datasets associated with this release.
4. The length of each data collection period presented in this time series may be different.

Download the data

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Estimates of important issues by age group are available for all time periods collected in Table 25 of the Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: personal well-being and loneliness dataset provided with this release.

3 . Big Tech companies

In the latest survey period, we asked some new questions about people's opinions of Big Tech companies. Big Tech companies are generally defined as the largest and most influential companies globally in the information technology (IT) industry.

Trust in Big Tech companies

When we asked adults to what extent they trust Big Tech companies, on a scale where 0 is "not at all" and 10 is "completely":

- 47% had no or low trust (score 0 to 4)
- 16% were neutral (score 5)
- 25% had high or moderately high trust (score 6 to 10)
- 9% reported that they "don't know"
- 3% reported that they would "prefer not to say"

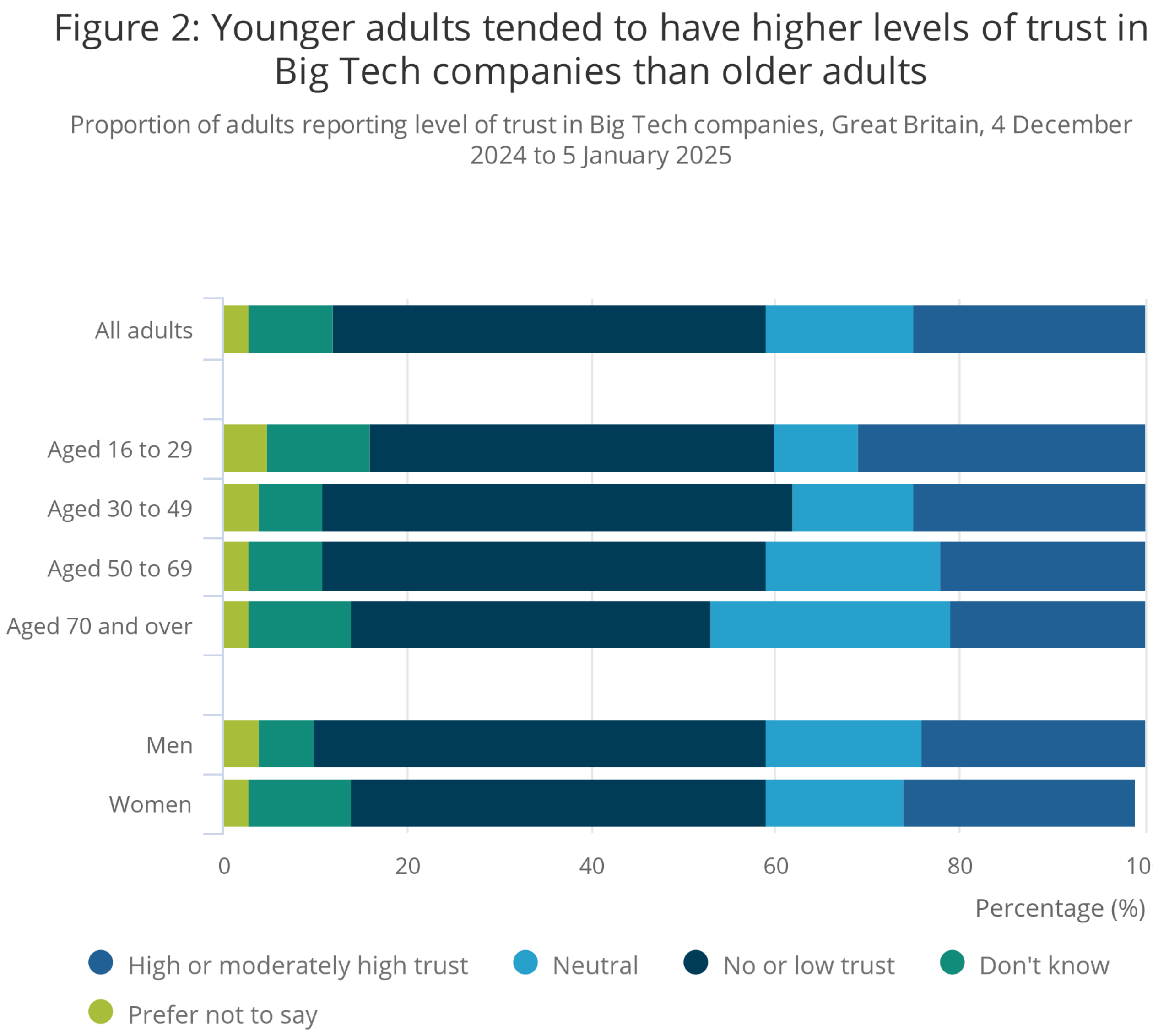
Around 1 in 8 adults (13%) reported having no trust at all (score 0).

Younger adults tended to have higher levels of trust than older adults. Around 3 in 10 adults (31%) aged 16 to 29 years reported high or moderately high trust, compared with around 2 in 10 adults (21%) aged 70 years and over; not all differences between age groups were statistically significant.

Adults aged 70 years and over were most likely to report that they were neutral (score 5) in how much they trust Big Tech companies (26%). Neutral sentiment tended to increase with age, with 9% of adults aged 16 to 29 years, 13% of adults aged 30 to 49 years and 19% of adults aged 50 to 69 years reporting neutral levels of trust in Big Tech companies.

Figure 2: Younger adults tended to have higher levels of trust in Big Tech companies than older adults

Proportion of adults reporting level of trust in Big Tech companies, Great Britain, 4 December 2024 to 5 January 2025



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

Notes:

1. Question: "Overall, how much would you say you trust Big Tech companies, where 0 is ‘not at all’ and 10 is ‘completely’?”
2. Base: All adults.
3. Percentages may not sum to 100% because of rounding.
4. Estimates and associated confidence intervals for all response categories are provided in the datasets associated with this release.

Benefits and risks of Big Tech companies

When asked which statement best reflected their views about the benefits and risks of Big Tech companies:

- 13% thought there were more benefits than risks
- 41% thought there were equal benefits and risks
- 31% thought there were more risks than benefits
- 15% reported that they "don't know"

Older adults (35% among those aged 50 to 69 years, 34% among those aged 70 years and over) were more likely to report that there were more risks than benefits than younger adults (23% among those aged 16 to 29 years; 29% among those aged 30 to 49 years).

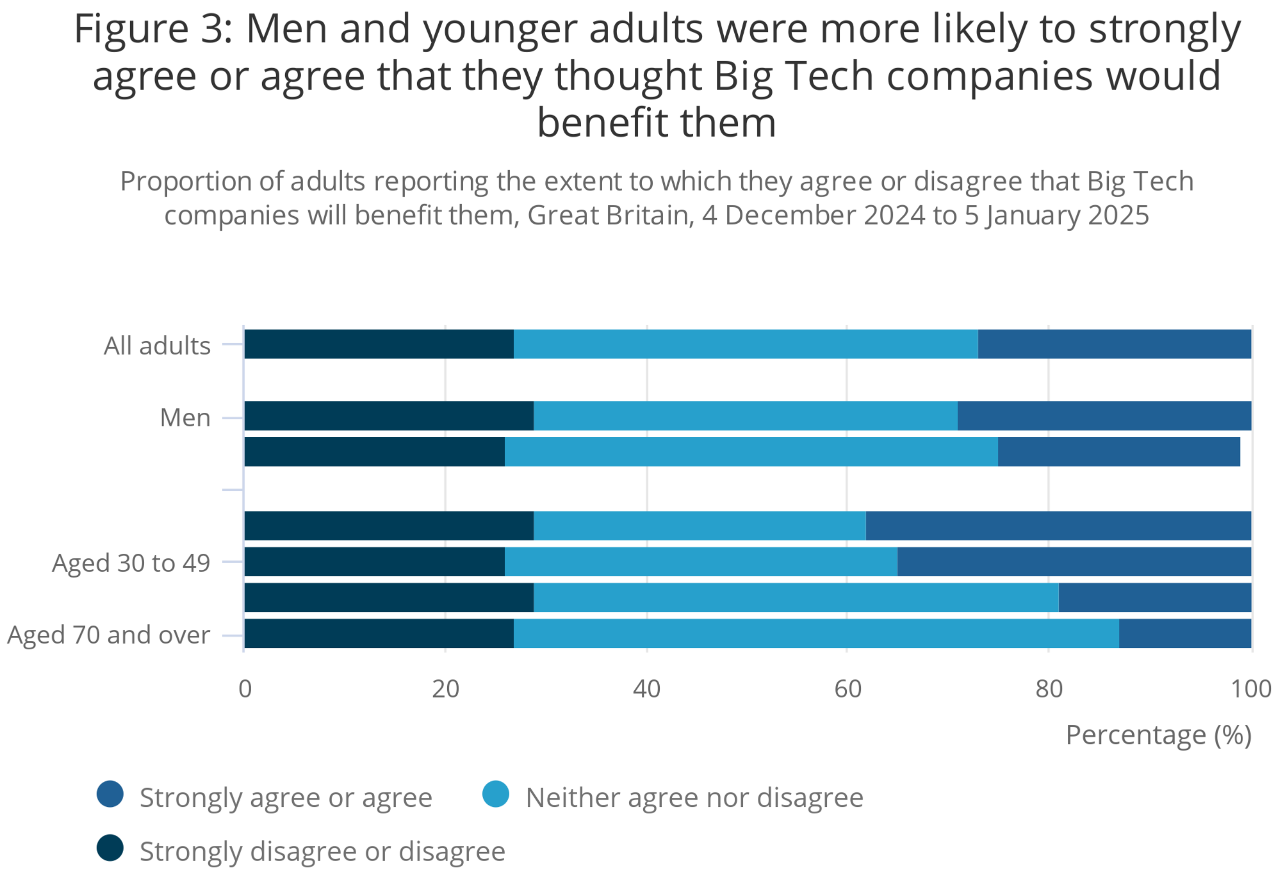
When all adults were asked to what extent Big Tech companies would benefit them:

- 27% strongly agreed or agreed
- 46% neither agreed nor disagreed
- 27% strongly disagreed or disagreed

Men (30% compared with 24% of women) and younger adults (38% among those aged 16 to 29 years and 35% among those aged 30 to 49 years, compared with 20% among those aged 50 to 69 years and 13% among those aged 70 years and over) were more likely to strongly agree or agree that Big Tech companies would benefit them.

Figure 3: Men and younger adults were more likely to strongly agree or agree that they thought Big Tech companies would benefit them

Proportion of adults reporting the extent to which they agree or disagree that Big Tech companies will benefit them, Great Britain, 4 December 2024 to 5 January 2025



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

Notes:

1. Question: "To what extent do you agree or disagree that Big Tech companies will benefit you?"
2. Base: All adults.
3. Percentages may not sum to 100% because of rounding.
4. Estimates and associated confidence intervals for all response categories are provided in the datasets associated with this release.

Impact on public services

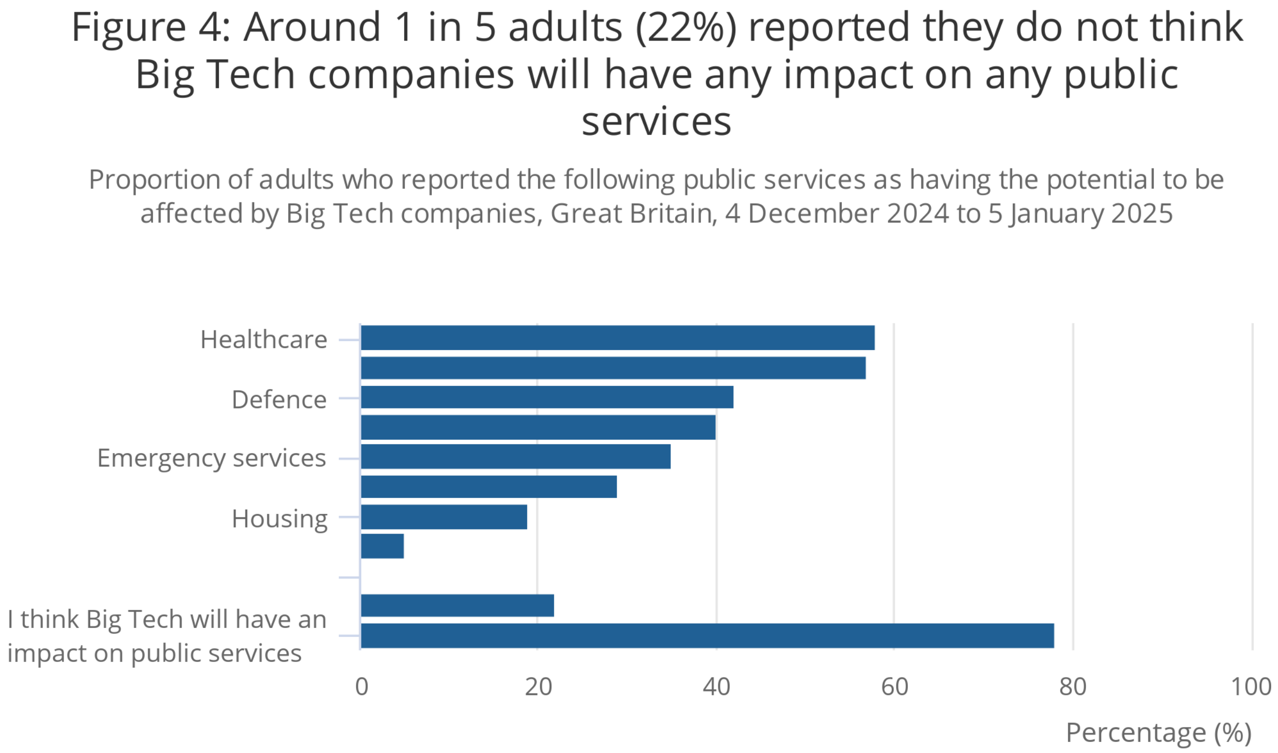
When asked "which public services, if any, do you think Big Tech companies could have the most impact on?", the most commonly reported services were:

- healthcare (58%)
- education (57%)
- defence (42%)
- transport (40%)

Adults were less likely to report that they thought Big Tech companies would have an impact on emergency services (35%), social care (29%) and housing (19%).

Figure 4: Around 1 in 5 adults (22%) reported they do not think Big Tech companies will have any impact on any public services

Proportion of adults who reported the following public services as having the potential to be affected by Big Tech companies, Great Britain, 4 December 2024 to 5 January 2025



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

Notes:

1. Question: "Which public services, if any, do you think Big Tech companies could have the most impact on?"
2. Base: All adults.
3. Respondents could select more than one option.
4. The "I think Big Tech will have an impact on public services" category is the proportion of adults who chose at least one of the presented options. Estimates and associated confidence intervals for all response categories are provided in the datasets associated with this release.

Further estimates of people's opinions towards Big Tech companies are available in our accompanying Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: Big Tech dataset.

4 . Financial Pressures

Almost 6 in 10 (57%) of all adults reported their cost of living had increased in the last month (4 December 2024 to 5 January 2025). Of all adults, 55% said they had reacted by spending less on non-essentials, 48% were shopping around more, and 39% were using less fuel, such as gas or electricity, in their home.

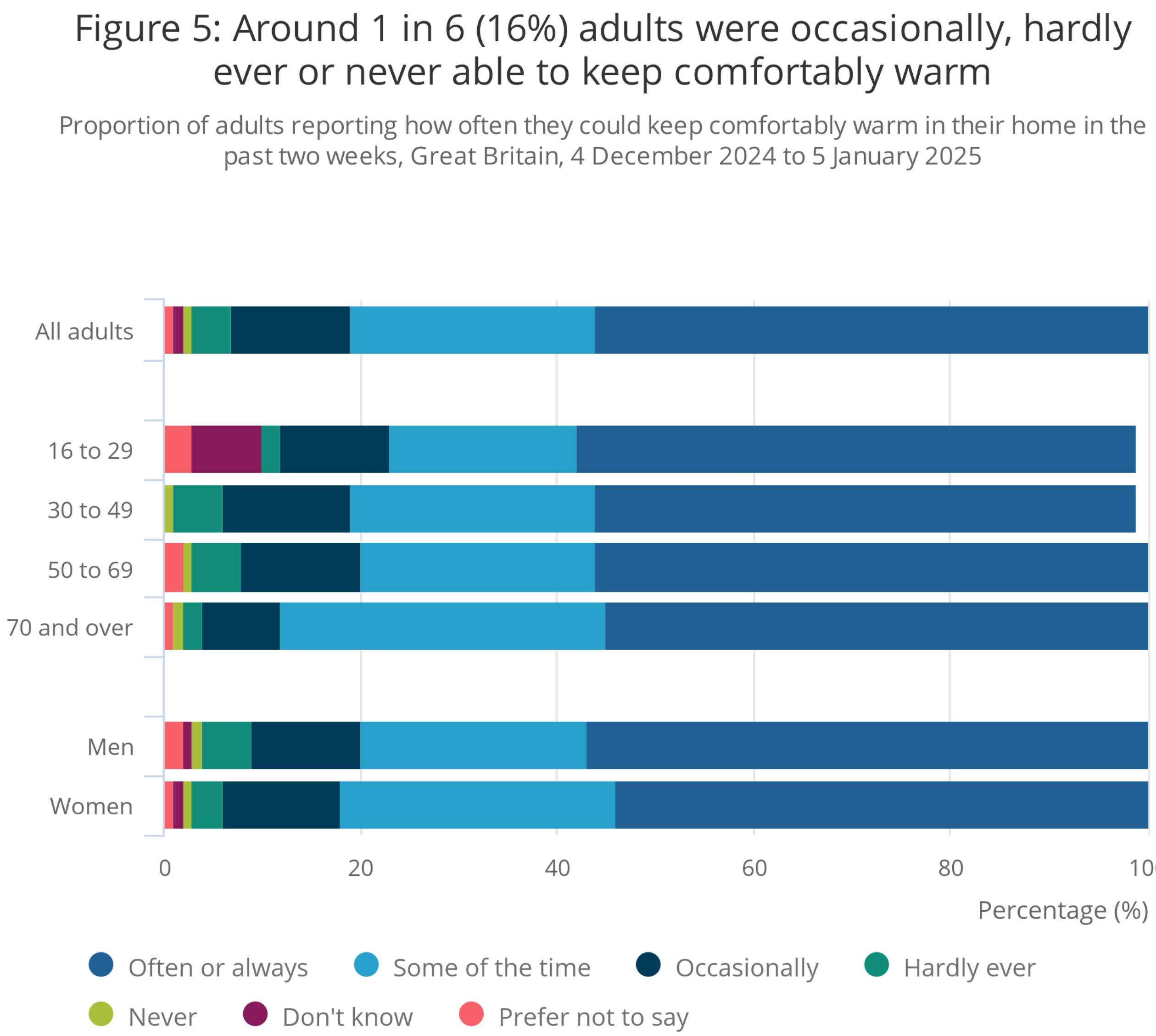
Among younger age groups, spending less on non-essentials was the most reported action taken in response to increasing living costs (49% among those aged 16 to 29 years; 61% among those aged 30 to 49 years). Shopping around more appeared to be the most common action taken among older age groups (56% among those aged 50 to 69 years; 55% among those aged 70 years and over).

Around 1 in 3 adults (32%) who pay energy bills reported finding it very or somewhat difficult to afford these, down from 39% in late autumn and winter 2023 (18 October 2023 to 1 January 2024). Additionally, around 1 in 6 (16%) reported they were occasionally, hardly ever, or never, able to keep comfortably warm in their home in past two weeks, compared with around 1 in 5 (19%) in late autumn and winter 2023. These comparisons should be treated with caution, as such changes are likely influenced by various factors, including differing fieldwork periods, weather, and energy prices.

Almost 1 in 5 (19%) of those aged 30 to 49 years reported difficulties keeping comfortably warm in their home, compared with 14% of those aged 16 to 29 years, 17% of those aged 50 to 69 years, and 10% of those aged 70 and over.

Figure 5: Around 1 in 6 (16%) adults were occasionally, hardly ever or never able to keep comfortably warm

Proportion of adults reporting how often they could keep comfortably warm in their home in the past two weeks, Great Britain, 4 December 2024 to 5 January 2025



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

Notes:

1. Question "In the past two weeks, how often were you able to keep comfortably warm in your home?"
2. Base: All adults
3. Percentages may not sum to 100% because of rounding.
4. Estimates and associated confidence intervals for all response categories are provided in the datasets associated with this release.
5. Some estimates have been not included in the chart for quality reasons. See the associated datasets for more information.

Of all adults paying rent or a mortgage, 29% reported that their payments had increased in the last six months. Younger adults aged 16 to 29 years were more likely to report an increase in payments (36%) than older adults aged 70 years or over (25%). Among adults paying rent or a mortgage, 30% found it very or somewhat difficult to afford those payments, down from 35% in late autumn and winter 2023.

5 . Health

In the latest period, around two-thirds of adults (65%) reported that their health was very good or good. This figure is similar to the previous year (67% in the period 13 December 2023 to 1 January 2024).

We continued to ask about adults' experiences of waiting for NHS treatment.

Among those currently on an NHS hospital waiting list (15%), around half (48%) strongly agreed or agreed that being on a waiting list had negatively affected their life. Impacts to their physical (55%) and mental (43%) health were the areas of life most-commonly reported as having been negatively affected while being on a hospital waiting list.

When asked about waiting for their hospital appointment, adults reported their overall experience to be:

- very good or good (22%)
- neither good nor poor (43%)
- very poor or poor (36%)

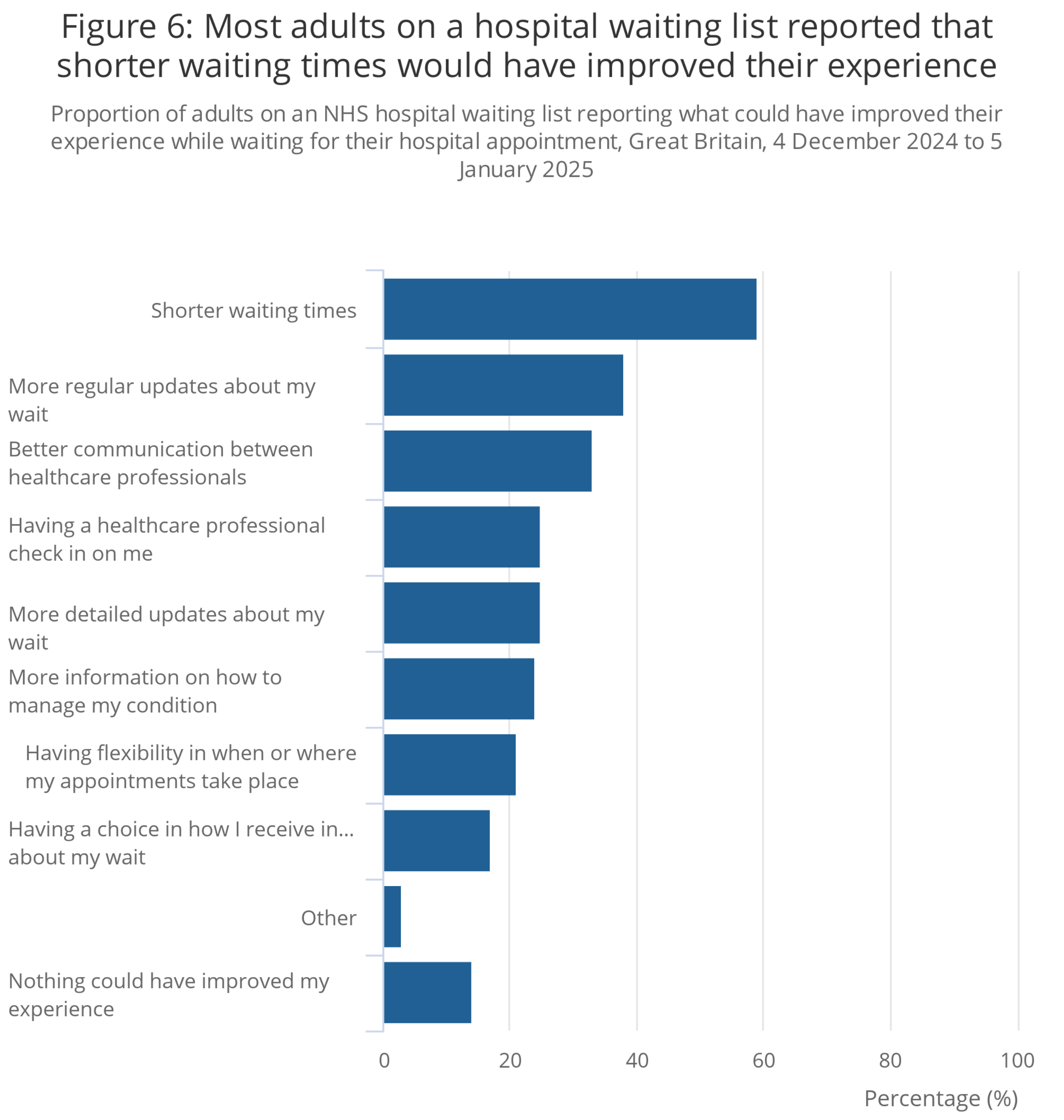
Younger adults (46% of adults aged 16 to 29 years; 45% of adults aged 30 to 49 years) were more likely to report a very poor or poor experience of waiting for their hospital appointment than older adults (30% of adults aged 50 to 69 years; 26% of adults aged 70 years and over). There was no statistically significant difference between men (38%) and women (34%).

When asked what, if anything, could have improved their experience while waiting for a hospital appointment, the most-commonly selected response options were:

- shorter waiting times (59%)
- more regular updates about my wait (38%)
- better communication between healthcare professionals (33%)

Figure 6: Most adults on a hospital waiting list reported that shorter waiting times would have improved their experience

Proportion of adults on an NHS hospital waiting list reporting what could have improved their experience while waiting for their hospital appointment, Great Britain, 4 December 2024 to 5 January 2025



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

Notes:

1. Question "While waiting for your hospital appointment what, if anything, could have improved your experience?".

2. Base: Among those who are currently on an NHS hospital waiting list.

3. Respondents could select more than one option.

4. Estimates and associated confidence intervals for all response categories are provided in the datasets associated with this release.

Over 8 in 10 adults aged 16 to 29 years (82%) and over 7 in 10 adults aged 30 to 49 years (73%) reported shorter waiting times as something which could have improved their experience while waiting for their hospital appointment. This compares with less than 5 in 10 adults aged 50 to 69 years (47%) and aged 70 years and over (46%).

Younger age groups (36% aged 16 to 29 years; 34% aged 30 to 49 years) were also more likely to report flexibility in when and where their appointments take place, as something that could have improved their experience, than older age groups (9% aged 50 to 69 years; 15% aged 70 years and over).

A similar pattern can be seen in the proportion of adults reporting that their experience of waiting for a hospital appointment could have been improved by having more information on how to manage their condition (43% of adults aged 16 to 29 years and 31% of adults aged 30 to 49 years, compared with 19% of adults aged 50 to 69 years and 11% of adults aged 70 years and over).

6 . Data on public opinions and social trends

Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: household finances
Dataset | Released 24 January 2025
People's experiences of changes in their cost of living, household finances and cryptocurrencies 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 24 January 2025
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: NHS hospital waiting experience
Dataset | Released 24 January 2025
Experiences of being on an NHS hospital waiting list for adults in Great Britain; indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: working arrangements
Dataset | Released 24 January 2025
Working arrangements of people in Great Britain; indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: social mobility
Dataset | Released 24 January 2025
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: Big Tech
Dataset | Released 24 January 2025
Attitudes towards Big Tech companies, including perceived risks and benefits, and level of trust; indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

7 . Data sources and quality

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

In the latest period, 4 December 2024 to 5 January 2025, we sampled 8,403 households. This sample was randomly selected from people who had previously completed the Labour Market Survey (LMS) or Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN). The responding sample for the latest period contained 3,055 individuals, representing a 36% response rate.

Survey weights were applied 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).

For all estimates in the datasets, confidence intervals are provided. Where comparisons between estimates are made, associated confidence intervals should be used to assess the statistical significance of the differences. In some cases, additional statistical hypothesis testing was performed to identify differences between groups.

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: 18 October 2023 to 1 January 2024]
Article | Released 29 January 2024
In-depth analysis on how increases in the cost of living and difficulty accessing NHS services have impacted people's lives during the winter period.

[Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators: 16 January 2025]
Bulletin | Released 16 January 2025
Early data on the UK economy and society. These faster indicators are created using rapid response surveys, novel data sources and innovative methods. These are official statistics in development.

[Business insights and impact on the UK economy: 23 January 2025]
Bulletin | Released 23 January 2025
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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