

Statistical bulletin

# Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: March 2025

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

Contact:  
Public Policy and Social Insights  
team  
policy.evidence.analysis@ons.  
gov.uk  
+44 3000 671543

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## Table of contents

1. [Main points](#)
2. [Important issues over time](#)
3. [Important issues by age](#)
4. [The cost of living over time](#)
5. [Experiences of increased cost of living](#)
6. [Data on public opinions and social trends](#)
7. [Glossary](#)
8. [Data sources and quality](#)
9. [Related links](#)
10. [Cite this statistical bulletin](#)

# 1 . Main points

The following information is from data collected from 5 to 30 March 2025, based on adults in Great Britain.

- When asked about the important issues facing the UK today, the most commonly reported issues were the cost of living (87%), the NHS (83%), and the economy (72%).
- Around 2 in 3 adults (66%) reported that their cost of living had increased in the last month; this proportion has been increasing since 5 to 28 July 2024 (45%) and is now at similar levels to May 2023 (67%).

The following information is from data collected from 8 January to 30 March 2025, based on adults in Great Britain.

- Older adults (aged over 50 years) were more likely to report issues such as the NHS, economy, crime, and immigration as important issues facing the UK today, whilst younger adults (aged under 50 years) were more likely to report the cost of living and housing.
- Around 1 in 4 adults (23%) reported that they would be unable to pay an unexpected but necessary expense of £850; those more likely to report this included those paying rent to the council or housing association (66%), and households with a single adult and at least one dependent child (64%).
- Around 1 in 33 (3%) adults reported that they had run out of food and were unable to buy more in the past two weeks; increasing to 20% for households with a single adult and at least one dependent child, and 14% for adults paying rent to the council or housing association.
- Disabled adults were more likely than non-disabled adults to carry out a range of actions we asked about because of their increased cost of living; this included using less fuel in their home (49% compared with 37%) and spending less on food shopping and essentials (48% compared with 36%).

## 2 . Important issues over time

In the latest period (5 to 30 March 2025), the cost of living (87%) and the NHS (83%) remain the two most reported important issues facing the UK (Figure 1). The proportion of adults reporting the NHS as an important issue has generally remained stable since October 2022 (82%). The proportion of adults reporting the cost of living as an important issue gradually decreased to 87% in December 2023 and has remained relatively stable since.

### **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 March 2025

#### **Notes:**

1. Respondents could select more than one option.

**Download the data**

### 3 . Important issues by age

Using a pooled dataset covering 8 January to 30 March 2025, we can explore in greater detail what different age groups thought were the important issues facing the UK.

The cost of living and the NHS were the two most reported issues for all age groups. The cost of living was the most reported important issue for those aged 16 to 29 years (90%) and those aged 30 to 49 years (89%); whilst the NHS was the most reported for those aged 50 to 69 years (88%) and those aged 70 years and over (89%).

#### **Figure 2: Younger adults (aged under 50 years) were more likely to report the cost of living and housing as important issues facing the UK today than older adults (aged over 50 years)**

Proportion of adults reporting each important issue by age, Great Britain, 8 January to 30 March 2025

##### **Notes:**

1. Respondents could select more than one option.
2. Data covers the pooled period from 8 January to 30 March 2025, therefore estimates will be different to the monthly estimates in March.

##### **Download the data**

Breakdowns by further groups of the population are available in our [accompanying datasets](#), covering the first quarter (January to March 2025). The next quarterly dataset covering April to June 2025 will be published in July 2025.

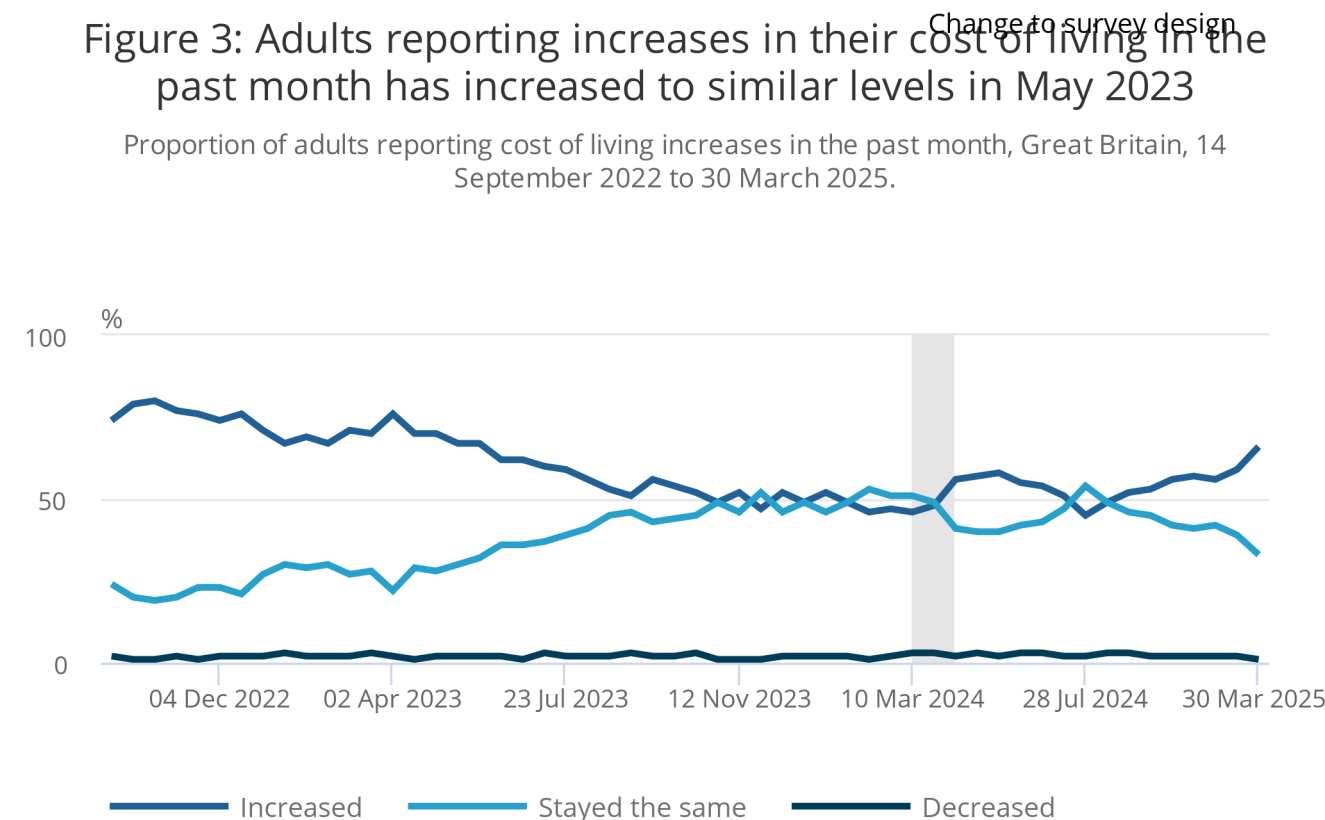
## 4 . The cost of living over time

In March 2025 (period 5 to 30 March 2025), around 2 in 3 adults (66%) reported that their cost of living had increased in the last month; a rise from 59% in February 2025. This proportion has been increasing since a low of 45% between 5 to 28 July 2024 and is now at a similar level to 17 to 29 May 2023 (67%).

Around 1 in 3 adults (33%) reported that their cost of living had stayed the same and 1% said it had decreased in the last month.

**Figure 3: Adults reporting increases in their cost of living in the past month has increased to similar levels in May 2023**

Proportion of adults reporting cost of living increases in the past month, Great Britain, 14 September 2022 to 30 March 2025.



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

Notes:

1. In the period 27 March to 7 April 2024 changes were made to the survey design. These may have had an impact on responses to this question.

## 5 . Experiences of increased cost of living

Using the pooled dataset covering 8 January to 30 March 2025, we explore how different groups of the population are affected by the increased cost of living.

A number of affordability measures have improved when compared with last year ([4 January to 24 March 2024](#)):

- around 1 in 3 (34%) adults reported they would be unable to save any money in the next 12 months (compared with 37% last year)
- around 1 in 4 (23%) adults reported they would be unable to pay an unexpected but necessary expense of £850 (compared with 28% last year)
- around 1 in 5 (20%) adults reported that they had borrowed more money in the past month compared with a year ago (compared with 23% last year)
- Around 1 in 20 (5%) adults reported they had been unable to pay a bill or standing order in the past month (compared with 7% last year)

However, certain groups of the population appeared more affected than others when looking at the main affordability measures.

## Age

Those aged 30 to 49 years were more likely than those aged 16 to 29 years, 50 to 69 years, and 70 years and over to report being unable to pay a necessary expense of £850 (28% compared with 23%, 23%, 15%, respectively).

Adults aged 30 to 49 years were also more likely to borrow more money than usual than any other age group (28% compared with 21%, 17% and 9%).

Those aged 30 to 49 years (7%), along with those aged 16 to 29 years (6%) were more likely to report being unable to pay a bill or standing order in the past month than those aged 50 to 69 years (4%) and 70 years and over (1%).

### **Figure 4: Adults aged 30 to 49 years were more likely than any other age group to report being unable to pay a necessary expense of £850**

Proportion of adults reporting difficulties with affordability, Great Britain, 8 January to 30 March 2025.

[Download the data](#)

## Disability

Adults with a disability were more likely than those without a disability to report that they:

- were unable to save any money in the next 12 months (44% compared with 29%)
- were unable to pay a necessary but unexpected expense of £850 (34% compared with 18%)
- had borrowed more money in the last month compared with a year ago (25% compared with 19%)
- were unable to pay a bill or standing order in the previous month (9% compared with 3%)

They were also more likely to report a range of actions as a result of cost of living increases (Figure 5).

### **Figure 5: Disabled adults were more likely than non-disabled adults to carry out a range of actions to help with increased cost of living**

Proportion of disabled and non-disabled adults reporting actions taken due to the increases in the cost of living, Great Britain, 8 January to 30 March 2025

Notes:

1. Respondents could select more than one option.

**Download the data**

## **Parents**

Parents were more likely than non-parents to be unable to pay a necessary but unexpected expense of £850 (33% compared with 21%) and to borrow more money than usual in the last month (34% compared with 17%).

Households with a single adult and at least one dependant child were more likely than households with more than a single adult and at least one dependant child to report that they had run out of food and were unable to buy more in the past two weeks (20% compared with 2%). They were also more likely to report:

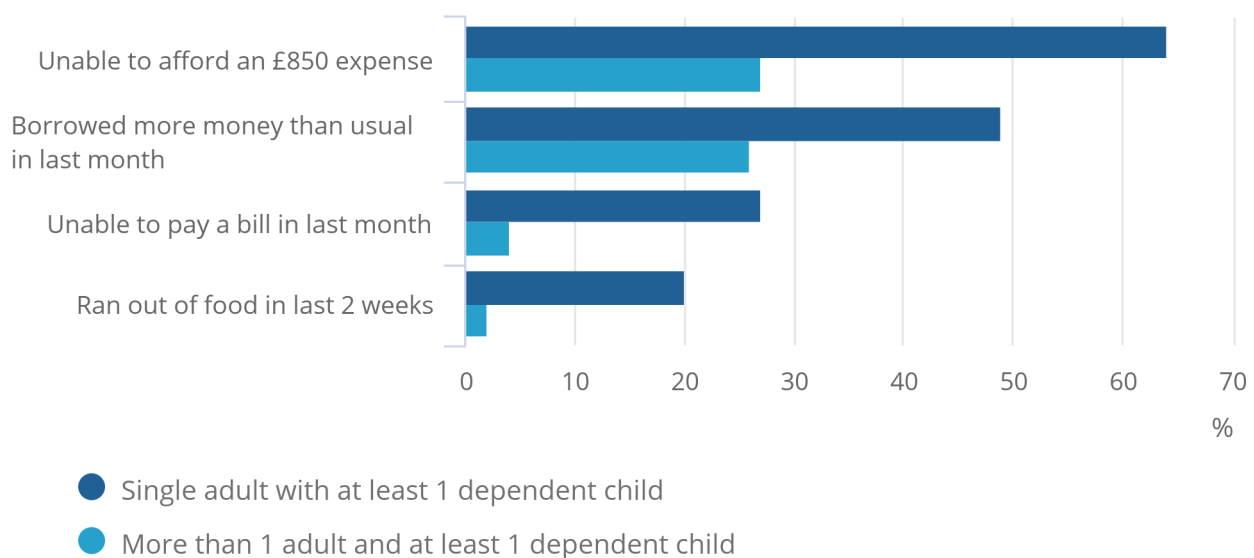
- being unable to pay a necessary but unexpected expense of £850 (64% compared with 27%)
- borrowing more money than usual in the last month (49% compared with 26%)
- being unable to pay a bill or standing order (27% compared with 4%)

**Figure 6: Around 1 in 5 (20%) adults living alone with at least one dependent child had run out of food in the last two weeks**

Proportion of adults reporting difficulties with affordability, Great Britain, 8 January to 30 March 2025.

Figure 6: Around 1 in 5 (20%) adults living alone with at least one dependent child had run out of food in the last two weeks

Proportion of adults reporting difficulties with affordability, Great Britain, 8 January to 30 March 2025.



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

Households with a single adult and at least one dependant child were more likely than households with more than one adult and at least one dependant child to report the following because of increases in their cost of living:

- spending less on food shopping and essentials (58% compared with 42%)
- using less fuel in their home (47% compared with 32%)
- using credit more than usual (35% compared with 18%)
- using support from charities (17% compared with 2%)

## Tenure

Renters were more likely than mortgage holders to report that they:

- would be unable to save any money in the next 12 months (46% compared with 29%)
- would be unable to pay an unexpected but necessary expense of £850 (51% compared with 20%)
- have been unable to pay a bill or standing order in the previous month (14% compared with 3%)

Renters were more likely than mortgage holders to run out of food and be unable to buy more in the past two weeks (10% compared with 2%).

Those paying rent to council or housing associations were more likely than those in private rented accommodation to report:

- being unable to pay a necessary but unexpected £850 expense (66% of those paying rent to council or housing associations compared with 43% of those in private rented accommodation)
- being unable to pay a bill or standing order in past month (20% compared with 11%)
- running out of food and be unable to buy more in the past two weeks (14% compared with 7%)

### **Figure 7: Renters were more likely to report being unable to afford an unexpected expense of £850 than mortgage holders**

Proportion of adults reporting financial difficulty because of cost-of-living increases in the past month by tenure group, Great Britain, 8 January to 30 March 2025.

[Download the data](#)

Renters (39%) were more likely than mortgage holders (22%) to report that their rent or mortgage payments have gone up in the past six months, and were also more likely to find their payments very or somewhat difficult (41%) than mortgage holders (26%).

Renters were more likely than mortgage holders to report the following because of increases in their cost of living:

- spending less on food shopping and essentials (53% compared with 42%)
- using less fuel in their home (44% compared with 37%)
- using support from charities (7% compared with 1%)

However, mortgage holders (46%) were more likely to report that they had shopped around more when compared with those who rent (40%).

Earlier this month we also published data on [elections](#) and [floods](#). More information can be found on our website.



## 6 . Data on public opinions and social trends

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

Dataset | Released 17 April 2025

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 well-being and loneliness](#)

Dataset | Released 17 April 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 17 April 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 17 April 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 17 April 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: household finances by personal characteristics](#)

Dataset | Released 17 April 2025

People's experiences of changes in their cost of living and household finances in Great Britain by personal characteristics; indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

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

Dataset | Released 17 April 2025

Personal well-being, loneliness and what people in Great Britain felt were important issues by personal characteristics; indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

### [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: NHS hospital waiting experience by personal characteristics](#)

Dataset | Released 17 April 2025

Experiences of being on an NHS hospital waiting list for adults in Great Britain by personal characteristics; indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

### [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: social mobility by personal characteristics](#)

Dataset | Released 17 April 2025

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

## 7 . Glossary

### Disability status

To define disability, we refer to the [Government Statistical Service \(GSS\) harmonised "core" definition of disability](#). This identifies "disabled" as a person who has a physical or mental health condition or illness that has lasted, or is expected to last, 12 months or more that reduces their ability to carry out day-to-day activities. Respondents are asked the GSS harmonised questions in the survey, meaning that disability status is self-reported.

## Parental status and household composition

In the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN), an adult is defined as a parent if they are the parent of a dependent child living in the household. In this case, dependent children include children and stepchildren.

A dependent child is someone aged under 16 years, or someone who is aged 16 to 18 years, has never been married, and is in full-time education.

## 8 . 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, 5 to 30 March, we sampled 9,529 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 4,295 individuals, representing a 45% response rate.

In the pooled period, 8 January to 30 March, we sampled 28,049 households. This sample was randomly selected from people who had previously completed the LMS or OPN. The responding sample for the latest period contained 11,894 individuals, representing a 42% 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 \(QMI\)](#).

## 9 . Related links

### [Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators: 17 April 2025](#)

Bulletin | Released 17 April 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: 3 April 2025](#)

Bulletin | Released 3 April 2025

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

### [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.

### [Impact of increased cost of living on adults across Great Britain: July to October 2023](#)

Article | Released 4 December 2023

Analysis of the groups of the population affected by recent increases in the cost of living using data from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey and of the characteristics associated with financial resilience from the Wealth and Assets Survey.

### [Households' finances and saving, UK: 2020 to 2024](#)

Article | Released 22 July 2024

The article investigates the financial position of households in recent years, where the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis have had large impacts on flows and stocks of household finances.

## 10 . Cite this statistical bulletin

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 17 April 2025, ONS website, statistical bulletin, [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: March 2025](#).