

Statistical bulletin

Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: December 2025

Social insights on daily life, including financial pressures among different groups this autumn and winter, from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

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1 . Main points

The following information is from data collected from 3 December 2025 to 4 January 2026, based on adults in Great Britain.

We asked people what they thought were the important issues facing the UK today.

- The cost of living (88%), the NHS (86%), the economy (71%), immigration (60%), crime (58%) and housing (55%) were the most commonly reported issues.

We looked at how different groups of the population were affected by financial pressures during the autumn and winter period, using data collected between 1 October 2025 and 4 January 2026.

- The majority of adults (62%) reported their cost of living had increased compared with a month ago, while 36% said it had stayed the same and 2% said it had decreased.
- Eating out less (58%), buying cheaper food (51%) and buying discounted food (38%) were the most commonly reported actions to save money on food because of the increased cost of living.
- Around one in three adults (34%) who pay energy bills reported finding it very or somewhat difficult to afford these bills; this was more common among adults paying rent to a council, housing association, or charitable trust (58%), Asian or Asian British (51%) and Black, African, Caribbean or Black British (46%) adults, adults living in the most deprived areas of England (46%), and disabled adults (45%).
- Around one in six adults (17%) reported they were occasionally, hardly ever, or never able to keep comfortably warm in their home in the past two weeks; this was more common among unemployed adults (30%), adults who rent their home (29%), those living in the most deprived areas of England (27%), and Asian or Asian British (28%) and Black, African, Caribbean or Black British (26%) adults.

2 . Important issues facing the UK

Since October 2022, we have asked respondents what they thought were the important issues facing the UK today. This helps us understand how public opinion has changed over time.

The most frequently reported important issues in the latest period (3 December 2025 to 4 January 2026) continued to be:

- the cost of living (88%)
- the NHS (86%)
- the economy (71%)

Other commonly reported issues during this time include:

- immigration (60%)
- crime (58%)
- housing (55%)

These proportions have generally stayed the same as during a similar period a year ago, when 86% of adults reported the cost of living and 72% reported the economy as important issues. The proportion of adults reporting the NHS is also similar compared with a year ago (88%), but has been increasing over the past few months, from 80% in October 2025.

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

Notes:

1. Respondents could select more than one option.
2. The length of each data collection period presented in this time series may be different.

Our monthly estimates give an up-to-date view of reported important issues and allow us to monitor trends over time. We have also analysed data collected over a longer period, from 1 October 2025 to 4 January 2026, to examine how different population groups are affected by financial pressures during the colder months.

In the period 1 October 2025 to 4 January 2026, 88% of adults reported the cost of living as an important issue. The following groups were more likely to report this (Figure 2):

- women (90%), compared with men (86%)
- unemployed adults (94%), compared with those who are retired (80%) or self-employed (85%)
- adults who rent their home (92%) or are currently paying off a mortgage (91%), compared with those who own their properties outright (83%)
- those in the Asian or Asian British (92%) or Other (95%) ethnic groups, compared with those in the White ethnic group (87%)
- adults who are parents of a dependent child (91%), compared with those without dependants (87%).

Figure 2: Unemployed adults and renters were among the groups who were more likely to report the cost of living as an important issue

Proportion of adults reporting the cost of living as an important issue, by characteristic, Great Britain, 1 October 2025 to 4 January 2026

Notes:

1. These data cover the pooled period from 1 October 2025 to 4 January 2026; therefore, estimates will be different to the monthly estimates covering 3 December 2025 to 4 January 2026.
2. See the associated datasets for further breakdowns, the other important issues, and related footnotes.

It is not possible to say whether a respondent's characteristics are causally related to their experiences of difficulties with the cost of living.

3 . Cost of living

In the period 1 October 2025 to 4 January 2026, 62% of adults reported that their cost of living had increased compared with a month ago, while 36% said it had stayed the same and 2% said it had decreased.

In the same period, groups who were more likely to report that their cost of living had increased compared with a month ago included:

- disabled adults (70%), compared with non-disabled adults (58%)
- older adults aged 70 years and over (69%), compared with those aged 16 to 29 years (54%), those aged 30 to 49 years (63%), and those aged 50 to 69 years (62%)

Among those who reported that their cost of living had increased compared with a month ago, the most commonly reported reasons were increases in:

- the price of food shopping (94%)
- gas or electricity bills (68%)
- the price of fuel (46%)

4 . Energy, food and housing costs

The increased cost of living affects what people can buy throughout the year. However, during the autumn and winter period, the cost of extra heating and lighting for people's homes can add additional strain on the affordability of basic needs.

Energy costs

In the period 1 October 2025 to 4 January 2026 around 1 in 3 adults (34%) who pay energy bills reported finding it very or somewhat difficult to afford these bills. This is similar to the proportion of adults who reported difficulties affording energy bills in late 2024 (33% in October, 32% in November, 32% in December). However, it is a decline from 38% in late December 2023 and 46% between 21 December 2022 and 8 January 2023.

In the period 1 October 2025 to 4 January 2026, groups who were more likely to report finding it very or somewhat difficult to afford their energy bills included:

- those paying rent to the council, housing association, or charitable trust (58%), compared with those who own their home outright (26%) and those who pay a mortgage or loan used to buy the property (31%)
- those in the Asian or Asian British (51%) and Black, African, Caribbean or Black British (46%) ethnic groups, compared with those in the White ethnic group (32%)
- adults living in the most deprived areas of England (46%), compared with those living in the least deprived areas of England (29%)
- disabled adults (45%), compared with non-disabled adults (29%)
- adults who are a parent of a dependent child (39%), compared with those who are not a parent of a dependent child (33%)
- women (36%), compared with men (32%)

Food costs

In the period 1 October 2025 to 4 January 2026, around 1 in 30 (3%) adults reported that in the past two weeks they or their household had run out of food and could not afford to buy more. This is similar to the proportion who reported this in late 2024 (3% in October, 3% in November, 3% in December).

In the period 1 October 2025 to 4 January 2026, groups who were more likely to report that they had run out of food and could not afford to buy more included:

- renters (10%), compared with those currently paying a mortgage (2%) and those who own their home outright (1%)
- adults living in the most deprived areas of England (8%), compared with those living in the least deprived areas of England (2%)
- disabled adults (6%), compared with non-disabled adults (2%)
- adults who are a parent of a dependent child (5%), compared with those who are not a parent of a dependent child (3%)
- adults aged 16 to 29 years (4%), 30 to 49 years (4%), or 50 to 69 years (3%), compared with those aged 70 years and over (1%)

Housing costs

Among adults currently paying rent or mortgage payments, around 3 in 10 (31%) reported finding it very or somewhat difficult to afford these payments in the period 1 October 2025 to 4 January 2026. This is similar to the proportion who reported this in late 2024 (35% in October, 30% in November, 30% in December).

In the period 1 October 2025 to 4 January 2026, groups who were more likely to report finding it very or somewhat difficult to afford their rent or mortgage payments included:

- those in the Asian or Asian British ethnic group (48%), compared with those in the White ethnic group (29%)
- adults who pay rent to a private landlord (45%), compared with adults who pay rent to a council, housing association, or charitable trust (30%) and adults who are currently paying off a mortgage or loan used to buy the property (26%)
- disabled adults (36%), compared with non-disabled adults (28%)

5 . Keeping warm at home

Energy, food and housing affordability, along with the colder weather, can affect people's ability to keep warm in their home.

In the period 1 October 2025 to 4 January 2026, around one in six adults (17%) reported they were occasionally, hardly ever, or never able to keep comfortably warm in their home in the past two weeks (13% occasionally, 3% hardly ever, 1% never).

Groups who were more likely to report this included:

- unemployed adults (30%), compared with those who were employed (18%) or self-employed (18%)
- renters (29%), compared with those who own their home outright (12%) or are currently paying off a mortgage or loan used to buy the property (15%)
- those in the Asian or Asian British (28%) and Black, African, Caribbean or Black British (26%) ethnic groups, compared with those in the White ethnic group (16%)
- adults living in the most deprived areas of England (27%), compared with adults in the least deprived areas of England (13%)
- disabled adults (23%), compared with non-disabled adults (14%)
- adults aged 16 to 29 years (17%), 30 to 49 years (21%) and 50 to 69 years (17%), compared with adults aged 70 years and over (10%)

Figure 3: Unemployed adults and renters were among the groups most likely to report difficulty keeping warm in their home

Proportion of adults who reported being occasionally, hardly ever or never able to keep comfortably warm in their home in the past two weeks, by characteristic, Great Britain, 1 October 2025 to 4 January 2026

Notes:

1. See the associated datasets for further breakdowns, the other important issues, and related footnotes.

6 . Actions carried out by people to manage costs

In the period 1 October 2025 to 4 January 2026, the most commonly reported actions taken because of increases in the cost of living were:

- spending less on non-essentials (61%)
- shopping around more (43%)
- spending less on food shopping and essentials (39%)
- using less fuel, such as gas or electricity, in their home (36%)

Changing behaviours when food shopping can be one way to reduce costs in the colder months when people experience increased energy costs. In the period 1 October 2025 to 4 January 2026, when we asked adults what actions they were taking to save money on food because of the increased cost of living, the most common responses were:

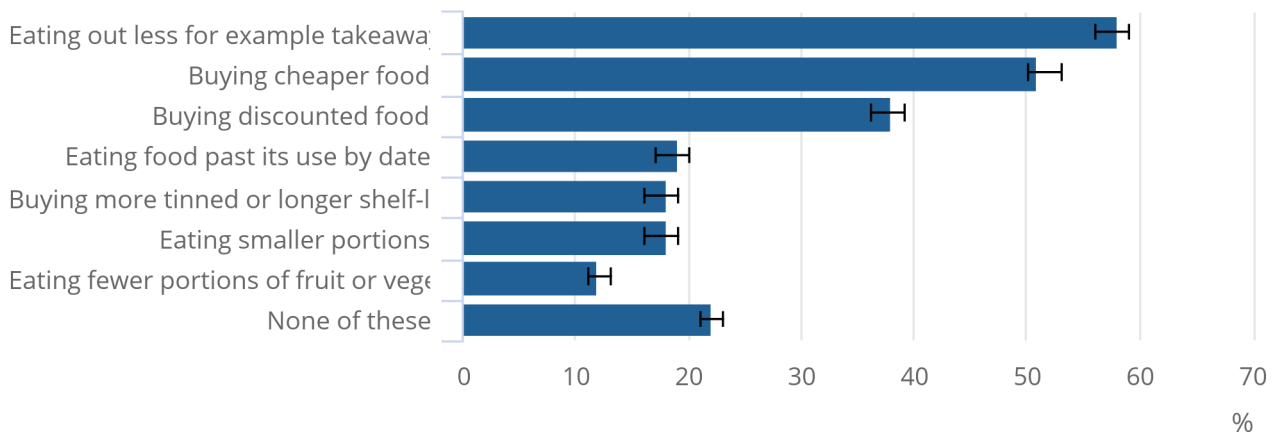
- eating out less, for example, takeaways or restaurants (58%)
- buying cheaper food (51%)
- buying discounted food (38%)

Figure 4: Eating out less, buying cheaper food, and buying discounted food were the most commonly reported actions to save money on food because of the cost of living

Proportion of adults reporting actions to save money on food because of the increases in the cost of living, by characteristic, Great Britain, 1 October 2025 to 4 January 2026

Figure 4: Eating out less, buying cheaper food, and buying discounted food were the most commonly reported actions to save money on food because of the cost of living

Proportion of adults reporting actions to save money on food because of the increases in the cost of living, by characteristic, Great Britain, 1 October 2025 to 4 January 2026



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

Notes:

1. Respondents could select more than one option.

Estimates of actions taken to save money on food because of the increased cost of living, by different population groups, are available in our [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: winter pressures by personal characteristics dataset](#).

7 . Data on public opinions and social trends

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

Dataset | Released 23 January 2026

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 23 January 2026

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: winter pressures](#)

Dataset | Released 23 January 2026

Actions people have taken to save money on food because of increases in the cost of living and how often people are able to keep comfortably warm in their home; indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

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

Dataset | Released 23 January 2026

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 23 January 2026

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: winter pressures by personal characteristics](#)

Dataset | Released 23 January 2026

Actions people have taken to save money on food because of increases in the cost of living and how often people are able to keep comfortably warm in their home; indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

[Opinions and Lifestyle Survey: sample sizes, response rates and user requested data](#)

Dataset | Released 23 January 2026

Survey information including sample sizes, response rates and user requested data for the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

View all data used in this statistical bulletin on the [Related data page](#).

8 . Glossary

Employment status

A respondent is "in employment" if their employment status is employee, self-employed or unpaid family worker. This is different to the definition used in our labour market estimates, which also include a small number of people on government training schemes. The Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) does not ask whether a person is on a government training scheme, so caution should be taken when comparing these figures with other labour market sources.

The "economically inactive - retired" and "economically inactive - other" categories represent people who are not in employment but are not defined as unemployed because they have not been seeking work within the last four weeks, and/or they are unable to start work in the next two weeks. For example, the "economically inactive - other" category may include people who are studying, have caring responsibilities or are disabled.

Deprivation

Deprivation is represented by the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) and is the official measure of relative deprivation for small areas in England. The IMD ranks every small area in England from 1 (most deprived area) to 32,844 (least deprived area).

Deciles are calculated by ranking the 32,844 small areas in England from most deprived to least deprived and dividing them into 10 equal groups. These range from the most deprived 10% of small areas nationally to the least deprived 10% of small areas nationally. To ensure robust sample sizes, we have further grouped deciles into quintiles.

Parental status

In the 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.

Renters

The category of tenure "all renters" includes the following responses:

- "shared ownership" (also known as "part-own part-rent")
- "pay rent to the council, housing association, or charitable trust"
- "pay rent to a private landlord"
- "live rent free" (including living rent-free in a relative's or friend's property but excluding squatting)

Other definitions

Definitions of all breakdowns of estimates used in this bulletin are available in more detail in the Notes tab of our accompanying [datasets](#).

9 . 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, 3 December 2025 to 4 January 2026, we sampled 7,893 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 3,240 individuals, representing a 41% response rate.

The latest pooled period, 1 October 2025 to 4 January 2026, contained 10,071 individuals. Where we have made comparisons with data from previous years, we have used similar time periods to account for potential seasonal effects. In these instances, we refer to the month and year of data collection in the text for simplicity, but specific start and end dates for each data collection period can be found in our accompanying datasets.

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).

From the 2 to 27 July 2025 data collection period onwards, the population totals used in weighting OPN estimates are based on 2022 mid-year estimates using updated population projections. For England and Wales, they are projected forward using scaling factors from 2021-based national population projections. For Scotland, they are projected forward using scaling factors from 2020-based national population projections.

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 \(QMI\)](#).

10 . Related links

[Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: September 2025](#)

Bulletin | Released 17 October 2025

Social insights on daily life and events, including attitudes towards important issues among different groups of the population, from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

[Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: December 2024](#)

Bulletin | Released 24 January 2025

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).

[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.

[The impact of winter pressures on different population groups in Great Britain: 22 November to 18 December 2022](#)

Article | Released 30 January 2023

In-depth analysis on how increases in the cost of living and difficulty accessing NHS services are impacting people's lives during the autumn and winter months.

[Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators: 22 January 2026](#)

Bulletin | Released 22 January 2026

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: 22 January 2026](#)

Bulletin | Released 22 January 2026

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

11 . Cite this statistical bulletin

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