

Statistical bulletin

# Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: January 2026

Social insights on daily life, including experiences of loneliness, hopefulness for the future, and attitudes towards important issues, from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey.

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# 1 . Main points

The following information is from data collected from 7 January to 1 February 2026, based on adults in Great Britain.

- The most commonly reported important issues facing the UK today were the cost of living (88%), the NHS (82%), and the economy (69%).
- Almost a quarter (23%) of adults reported feeling lonely often, always or some of the time.
- Younger adults were more likely to report feeling lonely often, always or some of the time (27% of those aged 16 to 29 years and 28% of those aged 30 to 49 years), compared with older adults (19% of those aged 50 to 69 years and 16% of those aged 70 years and over).
- Around 7 in 10 (69%) adults reported high levels of hope for the future; women were more likely to report this (73%) than men (65%).

In the same period, we asked people's opinions on opportunities in life.

- 6 in 10 (60%) adults disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement "children of today will have a better future than the current generation of adults", while 12% agreed or strongly agreed, and 28% neither agreed nor disagreed.
- Almost half (48%) of adults disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement "everyone has a fair chance to go as far as their talent and hard work will take them", while 30% agreed or strongly agreed, and 22% neither agreed nor disagreed.

## 2 . Important issues facing the UK

In the latest period (7 January to 1 February 2026), the cost of living (88%) and the NHS (82%) continued to be the most commonly reported important issues facing the UK (Figure 1).

The proportion of adults identifying the NHS as an important issue has remained relatively stable since October 2022, when it was 82%.

The proportion reporting the cost of living as an important issue declined over the same period, from 93% in October 2022, but has been relatively stable since around August 2023.

The proportions of adults reporting immigration (56%) and crime (55%) as important issues have increased since October 2022, when these proportions were 43% and 49%, respectively.

### **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 January 2026

#### Notes:

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

In the latest period (7 January to 1 February 2026), younger adults (age groups under 50 years) were more likely to report the cost of living as an important issue, compared with older adults:

- 95% of those aged 16 to 29 years
- 92% of those aged 30 to 49 years
- 84% of those aged 50 to 69 years
- 80% of those aged 70 years and over

Older adults (age groups over 50 years) were more likely to report the NHS as an important issue, compared with younger adults:

- 88% of those aged 70 years and over
- 86% of those aged 50 to 69 years
- 79% of those aged 30 to 49 years
- 77% of those aged 16 to 29 years

Women were more likely than men to report the cost of living and the NHS as important issues:

- 91% of women reported the cost of living, compared with 85% of men
- 86% of women reported the NHS, compared with 78% of men

### 3 . Personal well-being

We publish a range of data on well-being in the UK on an individual, community and national level, as part of our [Measuring progress, well-being and beyond GDP statistics](#). Our next update to our [Quarterly personal well-being statistics](#), using the Annual Population Survey, will be published on 27 February.

We also ask respondents about personal well-being, loneliness, and hope for the future in the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

## Loneliness

In the latest period, almost one in four adults (23%) reported feeling lonely often, always or some of the time.

A further quarter (27%) of adults reported feeling lonely occasionally and just under half (48%) reported feeling lonely hardly ever or never.

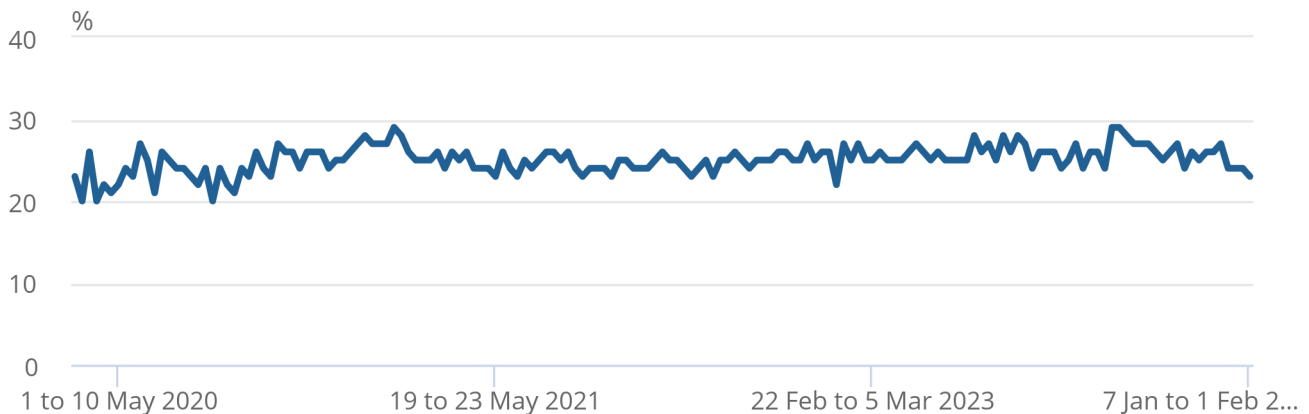
The proportion of adults who reported feeling lonely often, always or some of the time appeared to increase between March 2020 and February 2021, but has been relatively stable since early March 2021, when it was 25%.

### Figure 2: The proportion of adults who reported feeling lonely often, always or some of the time has been relatively stable since March 2021

Proportion of adults reporting how often they felt lonely often, always or some of the time, Great Britain, March 2020 to January 2026

Figure 2: The proportion of adults who reported feeling lonely often, always or some of the time has been relatively stable since March 2021

Proportion of adults reporting how often they felt lonely often, always or some of the time, Great Britain, March 2020 to January 2026



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

#### Notes:

1. The length of each data collection period presented in this time series may differ.

In the latest period, younger adults (age groups under 50 years) were more likely to report feeling lonely often, always or some of the time, compared with older adults:

- 27% of adults aged 16 to 29 years
- 28% of adults aged 30 to 49 years
- 19% of adults aged 50 to 69 years
- 16% of adults aged 70 years and over

Since we first started reporting loneliness by age group from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey, younger adults have generally been more likely to report feeling lonely often, always or some of the time, compared with older adults.

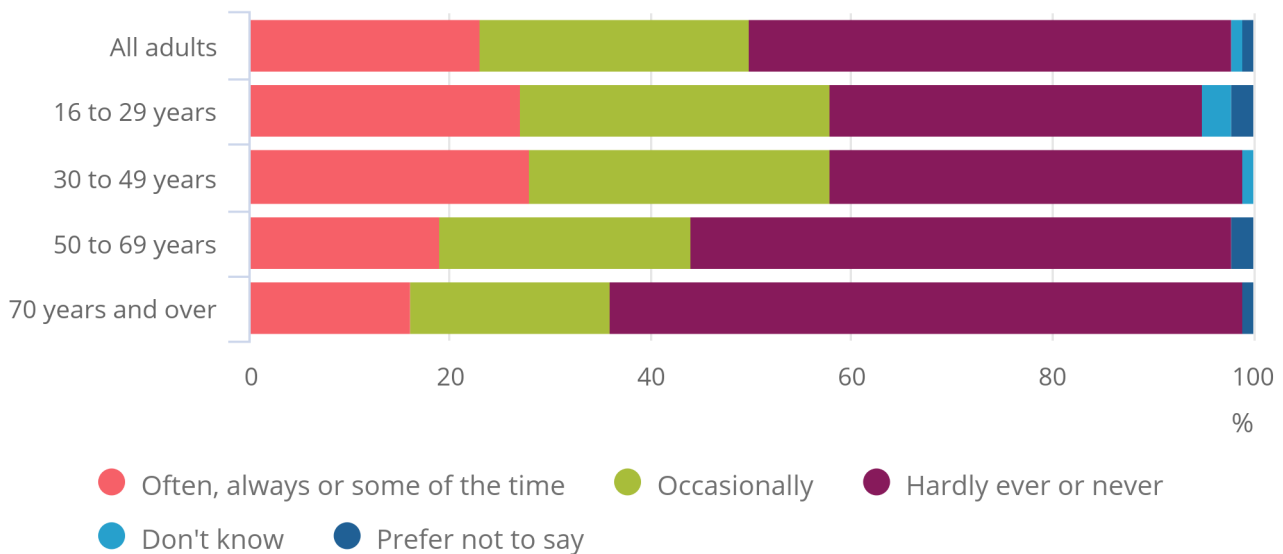
The proportion of adults who reported feeling lonely often, always or some of the time was similar for women (24%) and men (22%) in the latest period.

**Figure 3: Younger adults (age groups under 50 years) were more likely to report feeling lonely often, always or some of the time compared with older adults**

Proportion of adults reporting how often they felt lonely, by age group, Great Britain, 7 January to 1 February 2026

Figure 3: Younger adults (age groups under 50 years) were more likely to report feeling lonely often, always or some of the time compared with older adults

Proportion of adults reporting how often they felt lonely, by age group, Great Britain, 7 January to 1 February 2026



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

Notes:

1. Estimates may not add to 100% because of rounding.

## **Hopefulness for the future**

Respondents were asked to rate their level of hopefulness on a scale from 0 to 10 when asked "Overall, how hopeful do you feel about your future?".

In the latest period, almost 7 in 10 adults (69%) reported high levels of hope for the future (score of 6 or higher). This proportion has remained relatively stable since we started publishing this measure in the period 5 to 28 July 2024, when it was 68%.

In the latest period, women were more likely to report high levels of hope for the future (73%) compared with men (65%).

The average rating of hope for the future was 6.5 out of 10. This has also remained consistent since we started publishing this measure in the period 5 to 28 July 2024, when it was 6.6 out of 10. Average ratings of hope for the future were higher for women (6.7) compared with men (6.3).

## **4 . Perceptions of opportunities in life**

In the latest period, we asked respondents a set of questions about their opinions of a person's opportunities and outcomes in life.

### **Opinions on the future for the children of today**

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed that children of today will have a better future than the current generation of adults. In the latest period, 6 in 10 (60%) adults disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement, while 12% agreed or strongly agreed, and 28% neither agreed nor disagreed. Those that strongly disagreed or disagreed included:

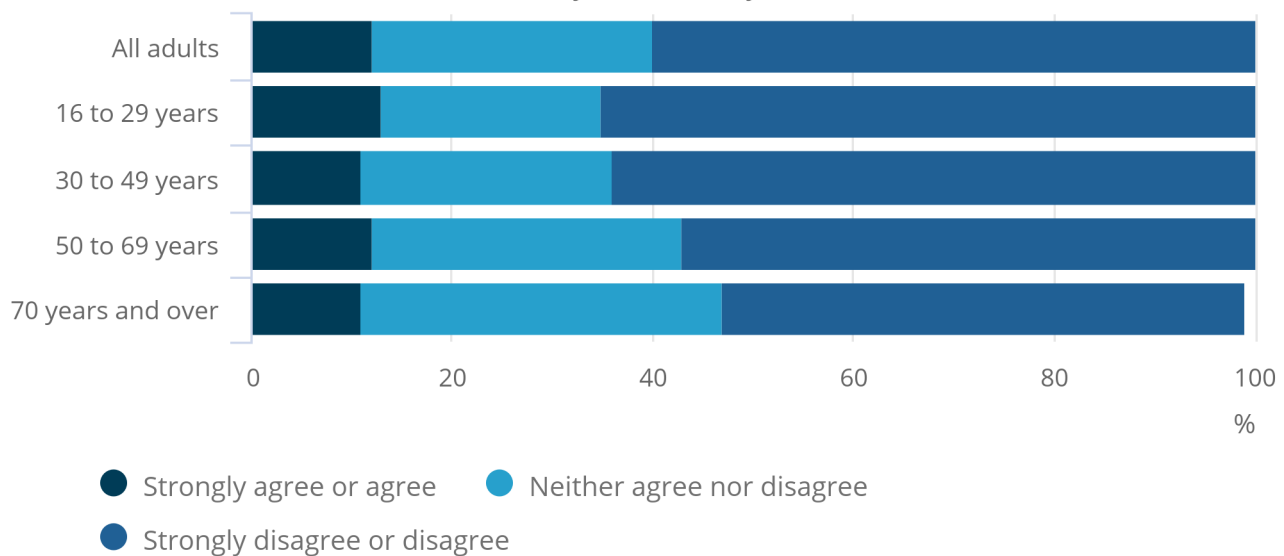
- 65% of those aged 16 to 29 years
- 64% of those aged 30 to 49 years
- 57% of those aged 50 to 69 years
- 52% of those aged 70 years and over

**Figure 4: Younger adults were more likely to disagree that children of today will have a better future than the current generation of adults, compared with those aged 70 years and over**

Proportion of adults reporting the extent to which they agree or disagree that children of today will have a better future than the current generation of adults, by age group, Great Britain, 7 January to 1 February 2026

Figure 4: Younger adults were more likely to disagree that children of today will have a better future than the current generation of adults, compared with those aged 70 years and over

Proportion of adults reporting the extent to which they agree or disagree that children of today will have a better future than the current generation of adults, by age group, Great Britain, 7 January to 1 February 2026



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

Notes:

1. Estimates may not add to 100% because of rounding.

## Having a fair chance in life

Respondents were also asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed that everyone has a fair chance to go as far as their talent and hard work will take them.

In the latest period, almost half (48%) of adults disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement, while 30% agreed or strongly agreed, and 22% neither agreed nor disagreed. Younger adults (age groups under 50 years) were more likely than older adults (age groups 50 years and over) to report strongly disagreeing or disagreeing with this statement, including:

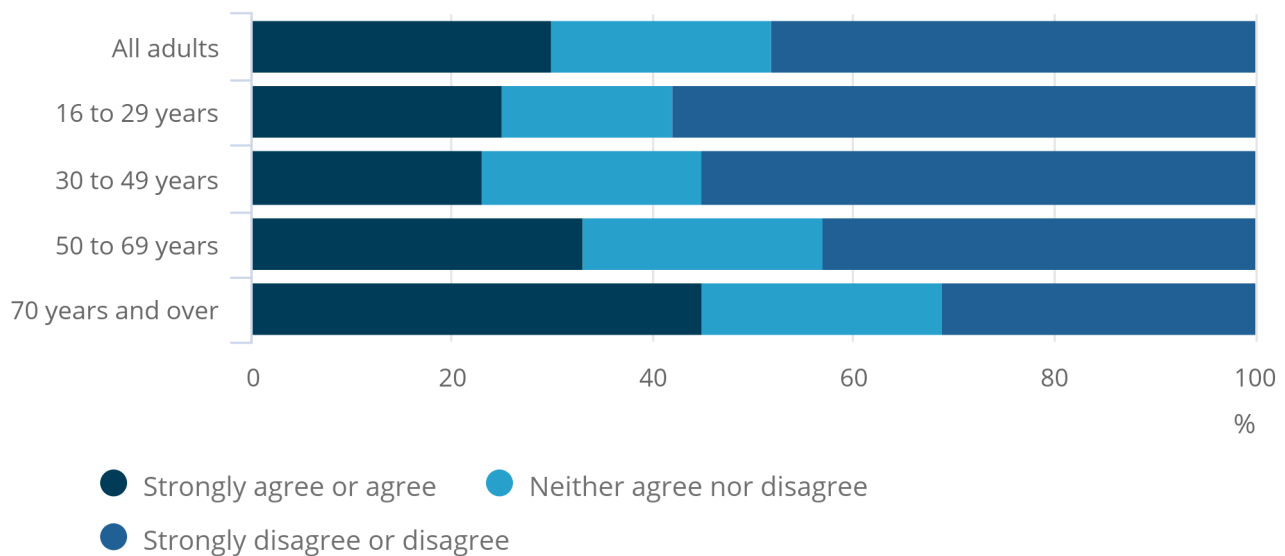
- 59% of those aged 16 to 29 years
- 55% of those aged 30 to 49 years
- 43% of those aged 50 to 69 years
- 31% of those aged 70 years and over

**Figure 5: Younger adults (age groups under 50 years) were more likely to disagree that everyone has a fair chance to go as far as their talent and hard work will take them**

Proportion of adults reporting the extent to which they agree or disagree that everyone has a fair chance to go as far as their talent and hard work will take them, by age group, Great Britain, 7 January to 1 February 2026

Figure 5: Younger adults (age groups under 50 years) were more likely to disagree that everyone has a fair chance to go as far as their talent and hard work will take them

Proportion of adults reporting the extent to which they agree or disagree that everyone has a fair chance to go as far as their talent and hard work will take them, by age group, Great Britain, 7 January to 1 February 2026



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

Notes:

1. Estimates may not add to 100% because of rounding.

**Influence of a person's background**

In the latest period, when we asked adults the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that a person's background has the biggest influence on their outcomes in life:

- 62% agreed or strongly agreed
- 24% neither agreed nor disagreed
- 14% disagreed or strongly disagreed

## 5 . Data on public opinions and social trends

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

Dataset | Released 20 February 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: social mobility](#)

Dataset | Released 20 February 2026

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](#)

Dataset | Released 20 February 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: working arrangements](#)

Dataset | Released 20 February 2026

Working arrangements of people in Great Britain; indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

### [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: winter pressures](#)

Dataset | Released 20 February 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 homes; indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

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

Dataset | Released 20 February 2026

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

## 6 . 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, 7 January to 1 February 2026, we sampled 7,906 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 3,090 individuals, representing a 39% 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).

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 \(QMI\)](#).

## 7 . Related links

[Measuring progress, well-being and beyond GDP](#)

Web page

Exploring progress in the UK using statistics on economy, environment and society.

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

Bulletin | Released 23 January 2026

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

## 8 . Cite this statistical bulletin

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 20 February 2026, ONS website, statistical bulletin, [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: January 2026](#)