

Statistical bulletin

Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: February 2026

Social insights on daily life, including personal well-being, cost of living, and attitudes on important issues, from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

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1 . Main points

The following information is from data collected from 4 February to 1 March 2026, based on adults in Great Britain.

- Around 1 in 8 adults (12%) reported low levels of happiness; this was more common among adults aged 16 to 29 years (16%) and 30 to 49 years (14%).
- Almost 1 in 10 adults (9%) reported low levels of feeling that the things they do in life are worthwhile; this was more common among adults aged 16 to 29 years (14%) and 30 to 49 years (11%).
- A third of adults (33%) reported high levels of anxiety; this was more common among women (37%) and those aged 16 to 29 years (43%).
- The most commonly reported important issues facing the UK today were the cost of living (88%), the NHS (82%), and the economy (69%); the proportion of adults reporting employment as an important issue (52%) was the highest it has been since we started asking this question in October 2022.
- Among the 56% of adults who reported that their cost of living had increased compared with a month ago, over 9 in 10 (93%) reported rising food shop prices, and 69% reported increases in gas or electricity bills, as reasons for their increased cost of living.
- Among adults who are currently paying rent or mortgage payments, a third (33%) reported finding it very or somewhat difficult to afford these payments; this is down from a high of 46% in early July 2023.

2 . Personal well-being

We publish a range of statistics on well-being in the UK on an individual, community, and national level, as part of our [Beyond GDP insights, UK headline measures of National Well-being](#). Our [UK Measures of National Well-being Dashboard](#) will next be updated in May 2026.

We also ask respondents about their personal well-being in the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN), including:

- life satisfaction
- feeling the things they do in life are worthwhile
- happiness yesterday
- anxiety yesterday

More information on these measures is available in [Section 6: Glossary](#).

Estimates from the OPN may differ from those published in our [UK measures of National Well-being dashboard](#) because of differences between the data sources used. Our [data collection changes methodology article](#) details these differences and the impact on estimates of personal well-being.

Life satisfaction

In the latest period, 11% of adults reported low levels of life satisfaction. This is similar to the proportion who reported this last year (9% in the period 5 February to 2 March 2025).

Younger adults were more likely to report low life satisfaction compared with older adults. This is broken down as:

- 16% of adults aged 16 to 29 years
- 12% of adults aged 30 to 49 years
- 8% of adults aged 50 to 69 years
- 6% of adults aged 70 years and over

Feeling things done in life are worthwhile

In the latest period, 9% of adults reported low levels of feeling that the things they do in life are worthwhile. This is the same as the proportion who reported this last year (9% in the period 5 February to 2 March 2025).

Younger adults were more likely to report low levels of feeling that the things they do in life are worthwhile. This is broken down as:

- 14% of adults aged 16 to 29 years
- 11% of adults aged 30 to 49 years
- 6% of adults aged 50 to 69 years
- 6% of adults aged 70 years and over

Happiness

In the latest period, 12% of adults reported low levels of happiness. This is the same as the proportion who reported this last year (12% in the period 5 February to 2 March 2025).

Younger adults were more likely to report low levels of happiness. This is broken down as:

- 16% of adults aged 16 to 29 years
- 14% of adults aged 30 to 49 years
- 10% of adults aged 50 to 69 years
- 8% of adults aged 70 years and over

Figure 1: Younger adults were more likely to report low levels of life satisfaction, feeling things they do in life are worthwhile, and happiness, compared with older adults

Proportion of adults reporting low levels of life satisfaction, feeling things they do in life are worthwhile, and happiness, Great Britain, 4 February to 1 March 2026

Notes:

1. More information on the well-being measures included in this chart are available in [Section 6: Glossary](#).

Anxiety

In the latest period, 33% of adults reported high levels of anxiety, the same proportion as last year (33% in the period 5 February to 2 March 2025).

Younger adults were more likely to report high levels of anxiety. This is broken down as:

- 43% of adults aged 16 to 29 years
- 34% of adults aged 30 to 49 years
- 28% of adults aged 50 to 69 years
- 29% of adults aged 70 years and over

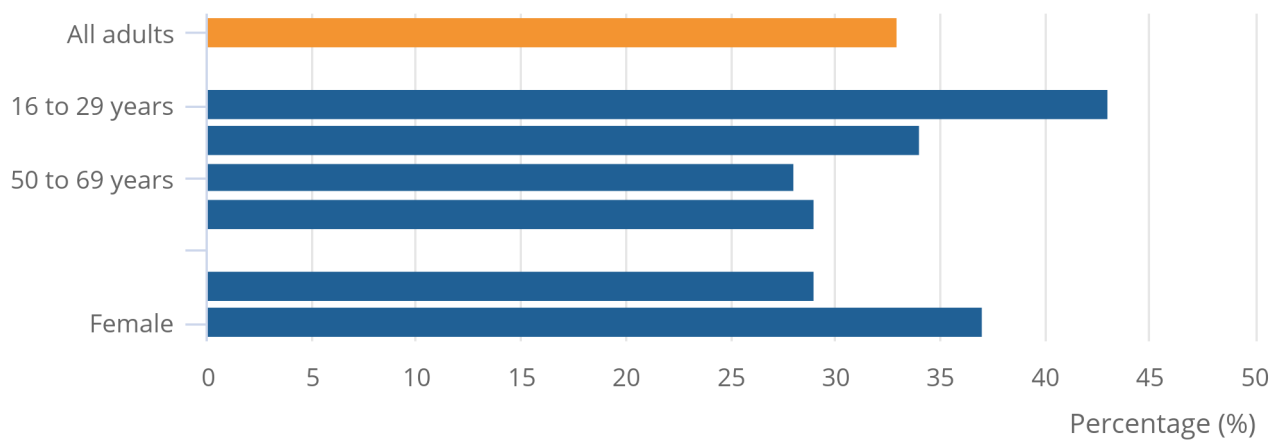
Women were also more likely to report high levels of anxiety (37%) compared with men (29%).

Figure 2: Younger adults and women were more likely to report high levels of anxiety

Proportion of adults reporting how anxious they felt yesterday, Great Britain, 4 February to 1 March 2026

Figure 2: Younger adults and women were more likely to report high levels of anxiety

Proportion of adults reporting how anxious they felt yesterday, Great Britain, 4 February to 1 March 2026



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

Notes:

1. More information on how anxiety is measured is available in [Section 6: Glossary](#).

3 . Important issues facing the UK

In the latest period (4 February to 1 March 2026), the most frequently reported issues facing the UK today continued to be:

- the cost of living (88%)
- the NHS (82%)
- the economy (69%)

Other commonly reported issues during this time include immigration (58%), crime (56%), housing (56%), and climate change and the environment (52%). The proportion reporting employment as an important issue (52%) has increased since October 2025, when it was 40%, and is now the highest it has been since we started asking this question in October 2022.

Figure 3: 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 February 2026

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.

4 . Cost of living

In the latest period (4 February to 1 March 2026), nearly 6 in 10 (56%) adults reported that their cost of living had increased compared with one month ago. This is a reduction from 62% reporting this in December 2025. A higher proportion of adults reported that their cost of living had stayed the same in the latest period (41%) compared with December 2025 (36%).

Among those who reported that their cost of living had increased compared with a month ago, over 9 in 10 (93%) adults reported the price of their food shop as a reason. Other commonly selected reasons for the increase in the cost of living included:

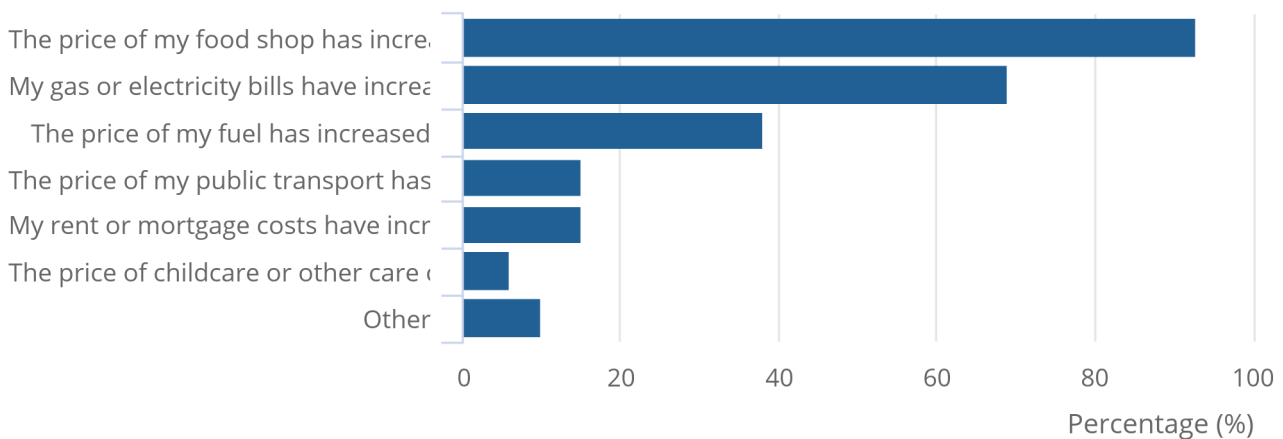
- gas or electricity bills (69%)
- price of fuel (38%)
- rent or mortgage costs (15%)
- price of public transport (15%)

Figure 4: The increased price of food shopping was the most commonly reported reason for increases in the cost of living in the last month

Proportion of adults reporting the ways in which their cost of living had increased in the last month, Great Britain, 4 February to 1 March 2026

Figure 4: The increased price of food shopping was the most commonly reported reason for increases in the cost of living in the last month

Proportion of adults reporting the ways in which their cost of living had increased in the last month, Great Britain, 4 February to 1 March 2026



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

Notes:

1. Base: respondents who said their cost of living had increased compared with one month ago.
2. Respondents could select more than one option.

Actions taken because of increases in the cost of living

In the latest period, the most common actions reported to save money on food, because of the increases in the cost of living, were:

- eating out less (59%)
- buying cheaper food (50%)
- buying discounted food (37%)

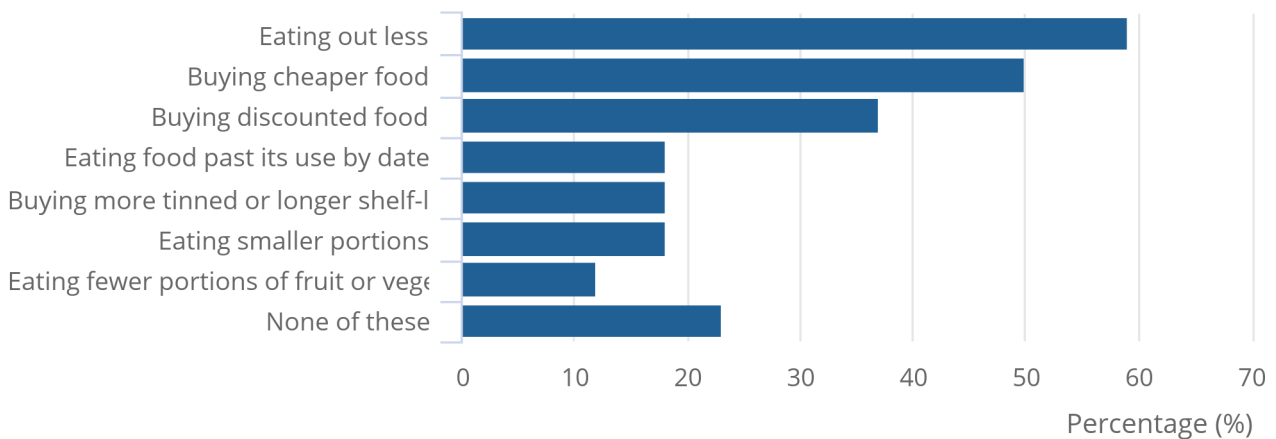
Almost 1 in 5 adults (18%) reported eating smaller portions because of rising living costs. The same proportion reported eating food past its use by date (18%), or buying more tinned or longlife products (18%), to save money.

Figure 5: Eating out less was the most commonly reported action taken to save money on food because of increases in the cost of living

Proportion of adults reporting the actions they have taken to save money on food because of the increases in the cost of living, Great Britain, 4 February to 1 March 2026

Figure 5: Eating out less was the most commonly reported action taken to save money on food because of increases in the cost of living

Proportion of adults reporting the actions they have taken to save money on food because of the increases in the cost of living, Great Britain, 4 February to 1 March 2026



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

Notes:

1. Respondents could select more than one option.

Housing and energy bills

In the latest period (4 February to 1 March 2026), 36% of adults who pay energy bills reported finding it very or somewhat difficult to afford these bills. This is down from a high of 49% in Spring 2023 but is the same as a year ago (36% in the period 5 February to 2 March 2025).

A third of adults (33%) who currently pay rent or mortgage payments reported finding it very or somewhat difficult to afford these payments. This is down from a high of 46% in early July 2023 but is similar to a year ago (32% in the period 5 February to 2 March 2025).

Around a quarter of adults (24%) who currently pay rent or mortgage payments reported that their payments had increased in the last 6 months, down from 48% in early July 2023.

5 . Data on public opinions and social trends

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

Dataset | Released 20 March 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: household finances](#)

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

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

Dataset | Released 20 March 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 March 2026

People's experiences of winter pressures in Great Britain; indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

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

Dataset | Released 20 March 2026

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

6 . Glossary

Personal well-being

Personal well-being is measured in the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) using the ONS4, which is a set of four survey questions covering:

- life satisfaction
- feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile
- happiness yesterday
- anxiety yesterday

Personal well-being data are presented as average scores on a scale from 0 to 10. Thresholds are also used to distinguish between high and low levels of personal well-being. Scores of 4 or below are considered "low" for life satisfaction, feeling that things done in life are worthwhile, and happiness, while a score of 6 or above is considered "high" for anxiety. More information is available in our [Personal well-being user guidance](#).

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 February to 1 March 2026, we sampled 7,943 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 3,236 individuals, representing a 41% 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 is available in our [Opinions and Lifestyle Survey quality and methodology information \(QMI\)](#).

8 . Related links

[Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: January 2026](#)

Bulletin | Released 20 February 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.

[UK Measures of National Well-being Dashboard](#)

Online tool | Updated 11 February 2025

An overview of well-being in the UK on an individual, community and national level. Considers change across 59 measures of well-being, grouped by 10 topic areas.

9 . Cite this statistical bulletin

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