

Statistical bulletin

# Cost of living and higher education students, England: 30 January to 13 February 2023

Experimental statistics from the Student Cost of Living Insights Study (SCoLIS) in England. Includes information on the behaviours, plans, opinions and well-being of higher education students in the context of the increases in cost-of-living.

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# 1 . Main points

- More than 9 in 10 (92%) higher education students reported that their cost of living has increased compared with last year, similar to students in early November 2022 (91%).
- More than 9 in 10 (91%) students were either somewhat or very worried about the rising cost of living, the same as in early November 2022.
- Around half (49%) of students felt they had financial difficulties, with 33% saying these were minor and 16% saying they had major financial difficulties; this is similar to students in early November 2022.
- More than two-thirds (68%) of students were receiving a student loan; of those, nearly 6 in 10 (58%) said it did not cover their living costs, while one in four (25%) said that it covered their living costs but only just.
- In response to the rising cost of living, 3 in 10 (30%) students had taken on new debt, a significant increase from early November 2022 (25%); of those that did, 71% reported they did so because their student loan was not enough to support their living costs.
- More than three-quarters (78%) of students were concerned that the rising cost of living may affect how well they do in their studies; more than one-third (35%) of students reported they are now less likely to do further study after their course has completed.
- The average level of life satisfaction among higher education students (5.8) was significantly lower than the adult population in Great Britain (6.9).
- Around 46% of students reported their mental health and well-being had worsened since the start of the autumn term 2022; this is similar to students in early November 2022 (45%).

The statistics presented are experimental statistics, so care needs to be taken when interpreting them. This survey has a relatively small sample size of 1,964 and low response rate of 0.9%. While this has been weighted and is comparable with findings of similar surveys, this has an impact on the level of [uncertainty](#) of this research.

## 2 . Cost of living and higher education students data

[Cost of living and higher education students: England](#)

Dataset | Released 24 February 2023

Experimental statistics from the Student Cost of Living Insights Study (SCoLIS) in England. Includes information on the behaviours, plans, opinions and well-being of higher education students in the context of the increases in cost-of-living.

## 3 . Glossary

### Students

Students included in this study are higher education students studying foundation, undergraduate and postgraduate level programmes at universities in England.

## Adult population in Great Britain

Where possible, comparisons have been drawn with the [Opinions and Lifestyle Survey \(OPN\)](#) to compare the experiences and behaviours of students with the adult population in Great Britain. The comparisons are used to give a broad idea of the different experiences of each group but the statistics measure data from different timeframes, slightly different questions and different sampling methods so are not directly comparable. The period of the OPN used was 8 to 19 February 2023.

## Students in early November 2022

Comparisons have been drawn with the previous wave of the Student Cost of Living Insights Study to compare the experiences and behaviours of students in England between these two time periods.

The period of the previous wave used for comparison is 24 October to 7 November 2022 (“early November 2022”).

## Statistical significance

The statistical significance of differences has been determined by non-overlapping confidence intervals. A [confidence interval](#) gives an indication of the degree of uncertainty of an estimate, showing the precision of a sample estimate. The 95% confidence intervals are calculated so that if we repeated the study many times, 95% of the time the true unknown value would lie between the lower and upper confidence limits. A wider interval indicates more uncertainty in the estimate. More information is available on our [uncertainty pages](#).

## 4 . Measuring the data

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is conducting a study analysing higher education student behaviour and attitudes while cost of living is rising. This study is called the Student Cost of Living Insights Study (SCoLIS).

The study was conducted between 30 January and 13 February 2023, using an online survey tool and all answers were self-reported. A total of 229,475 higher education students at a selection of partner universities in England were invited to take part via their email address held by their institution. The response rate to the survey was 0.9%.

## Weighting

Estimates in this report are based on weighted counts that are representative of the population of higher education students studying at participating universities in England. Population totals are taken from the [Higher Education Statistics Agency \(HESA\) 2020 to 2021 estimates](#). Estimates are weighted to adjust for sex and age.

## Uncertainty in the data

The experimental statistics presented in this bulletin contain [uncertainty](#). As with all survey data based on a sample, they are susceptible to respondent error and bias. This survey has a low response rate of 0.9%, which increases the uncertainty and the chances of non-response bias in these statistics. In some cases, we have used confidence intervals to determine whether differences between students, those aged 16 to 29 years, and the general population of Great Britain, are statistically significant.

## 5 . Related links

### [Coronavirus and higher education students, England, 25 February to 7 March 2022](#)

Statistical bulletin | Released 21 March 2022

Experimental statistics from the Student COVID-19 Insights Survey (SCIS) in England. Includes information on the behaviours, plans, opinions and well-being of higher education students in the context of guidance on the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

### [Coronavirus and university students, 3 to 8 November 2020, Great Britain](#)

Dataset | Released 18 November 2020

Experimental statistics from a pilot of the Student COVID-19 Insights Survey. Includes information on the behaviours and well-being of university students attending four British universities in the context of guidance on the coronavirus (COVID-19).

### [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: 8 to 19 February 2023](#)

Dataset | Released 24 February 2023

Social insights on daily life and events, including the cost of living, working arrangements and well-being from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

### [Impact of increased cost of living on adults across Great Britain: September 2022 to January 2023](#)

Article | Released 20 February 2023

Analysis of the proportion of the population that are affected by an increase in their cost of living, and of the characteristics associated with having difficulty affording or being behind on energy, mortgage or rental payments, using data from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey.

## 6 . Cite this statistical bulletin

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