

Statistical bulletin

# Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: 25 January to 5 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).

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# 1 . Main points

The following information is for the latest survey period 25 January to 5 February 2023, based on adults in Great Britain.

- When asked about the important issues facing the UK today, the most commonly reported issues continue to be the cost of living (92%), the NHS (87%), the economy (77%), and climate change and the environment (56%).
- Around 9 in 10 (94%) adults reported their cost of living had increased compared with a year ago, while a lower percentage (69%) reported an increase in their cost of living compared with one month ago.
- Around 1 in 30 (3%) working adults reported that they missed work because of industrial action when thinking of the past seven days at the time of completing the survey (between 25 January and 5 February).
- Around half (51%) of adults reported that they were worried (very or somewhat) about keeping warm in their home this winter (51% in the previous period from 11 to 22 January 2023).
- The most common actions reported by adults because of the rising cost of living were spending less on non-essentials (69%), and using less fuel, such as gas or electricity, in their homes (60%), similar to the previous period.
- Just over a quarter (27%) of adults reported feeling lonely always, often, or some of the time; more specifically, around 1 in 14 (7%) adults reported feeling lonely always or often.

## 2 . Important issues facing the UK

Estimates in this release are based on data collected between 25 January and 5 February 2023 (the “latest period”) and 11 to 22 January 2023 (the “previous period”). Analysis is based on adults in Great Britain.

In the latest period, we asked adults what they feel are important issues facing the UK today (Figure 1). The most commonly reported issues were the same as in the previous period:

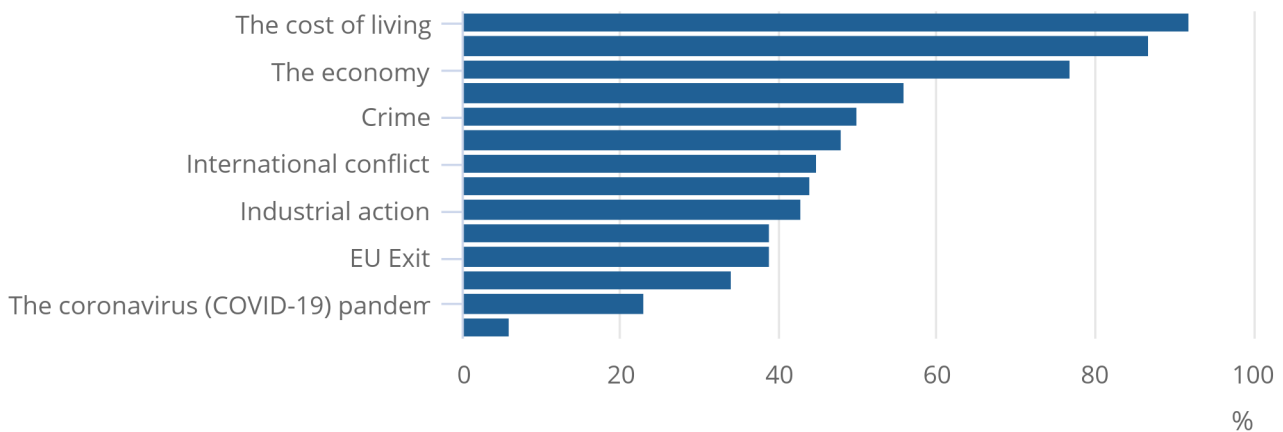
- the cost of living (92%)
- the NHS (87%)
- the economy (77%)
- climate change and the environment (56%)

**Figure 1: Around 9 in 10 (92%) reported the cost of living as an important issue facing the UK today**

Proportion of all adults in Great Britain, 25 January to 5 February 2023

### Figure 1: Around 9 in 10 (92%) reported the cost of living as an important issue facing the UK today

Proportion of all adults in Great Britain, 25 January to 5 February 2023



**Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS) – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN)**

**Notes:**

1. Question: "What do you think are important issues facing the UK today?"
2. Base: all adults.
3. Respondents were able to choose more than one option.

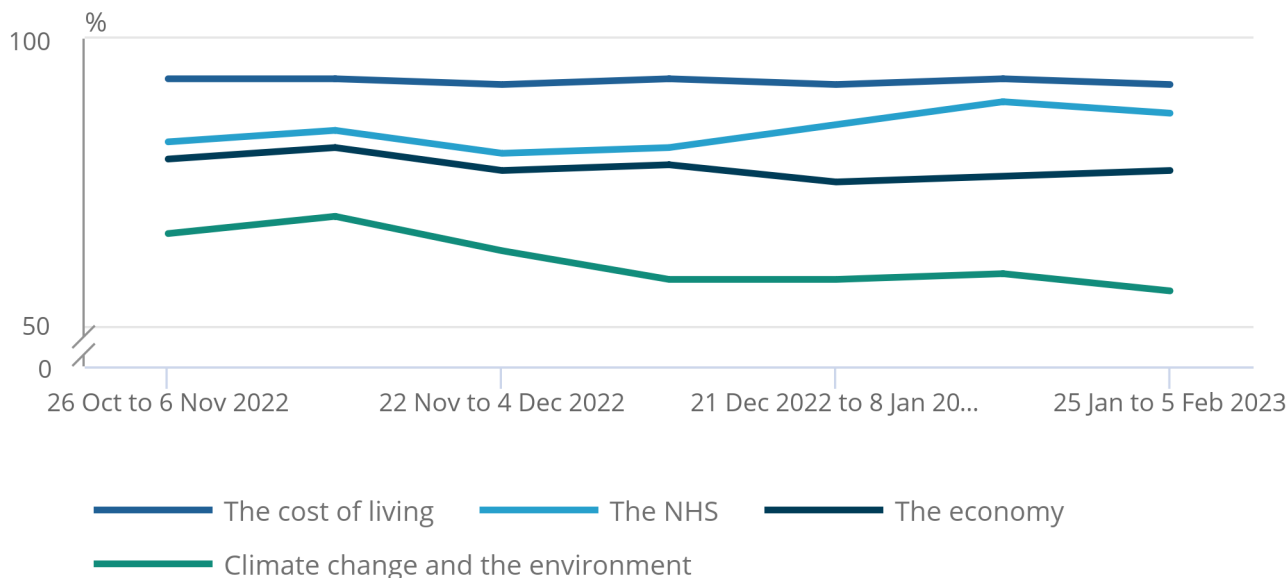
Looking at the four most common options, the majority appeared to be similar to previous weeks with some small changes (Figure 2). There has been a slight increase in adults reporting the NHS as an important issue over the winter period, and a decrease in reporting climate change and the environment. This may be due to seasonal pressures and cold weather.

## Figure 2: The proportion of adults reporting the NHS as an important issue has increased over the winter period

Proportion of all adults in Great Britain, 25 January to 5 February 2023

### Figure 2: The proportion of adults reporting the NHS as an important issue has increased over the winter period

Proportion of all adults in Great Britain, 25 January to 5 February 2023



Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS) – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN)

#### Notes:

1. Question: "What do you think are important issues facing the UK today?"
2. Base: all adults.
3. Respondents were able to choose more than one option.

## 3 . Cost of living

### Cost of living increases

In the latest period, we continued to ask adults about changes to their cost of living.

Over 9 in 10 (94%) reported their cost of living had increased compared with a year ago. Compared with one month ago, 69% reported an increase in their cost of living, an increase from the previous period (67%). This still represents an increase from 62% when we first asked about this in the period 3 to 14 November 2021.

### Reasons for cost of living increases

The most commonly reported reasons given by adults for the rise in their cost of living over the past month remained the same as in the previous period and were increases in:

- the price of food shopping (95%)
- their gas or electricity bills (73%)
- the price of fuel (39%)

## Actions taken because of this rising cost of living

The most common action reported by all adults because of the rising cost of living in the latest period was spending less on non-essentials (69%). This is an increase from the previous period (66%). The next most common action reported by adults was using less fuel such as gas or electricity in their home (60%). This is similar to the previous period (59%).

In line with the previous period, adults also reported shopping around more (48%) and spending less on food shopping and essentials (44%) because of the rising cost of living (48% and 46%, respectively, in the previous period).

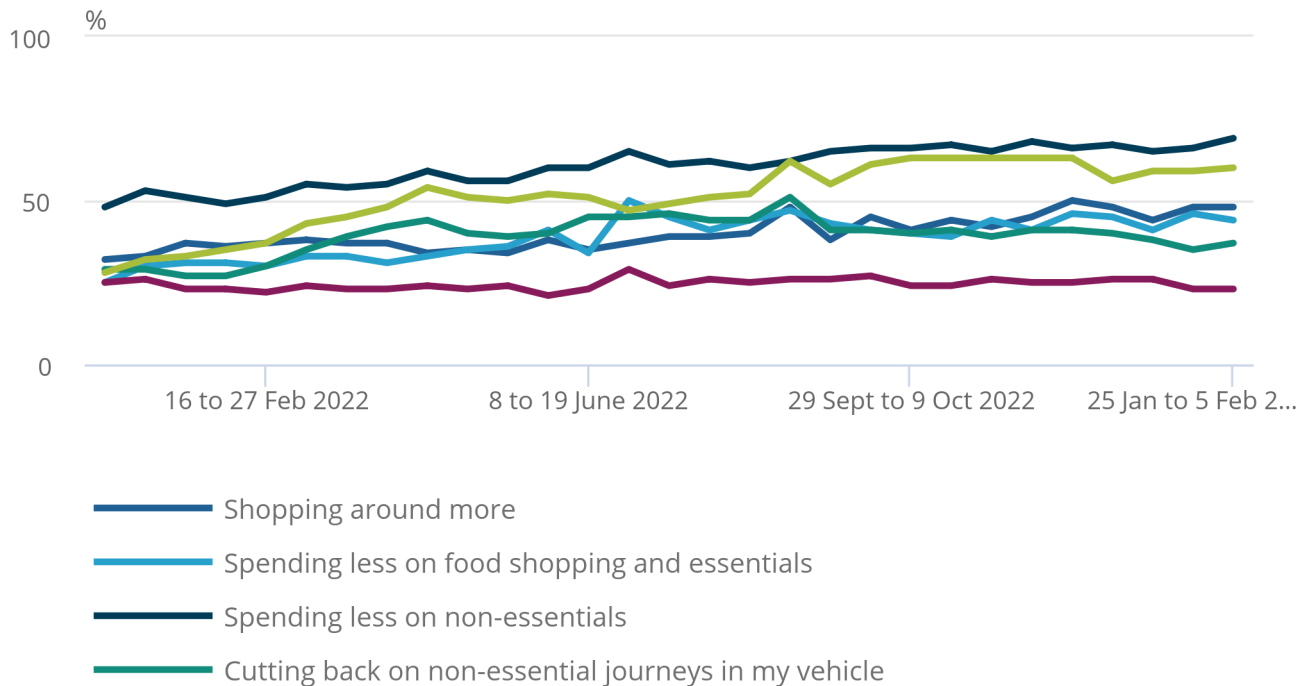
The action of cutting back on non-essential journeys in vehicles has increased slightly, with 37% of adults reporting this during this period (35% in the previous period). Despite a slight increase in the current period, there has been an overall decrease since December 2022, which may be explained by eases in motor fuel inflation in December 2022, as reported on our [Cost of Living Insights webpage](#). The summer peak could be explained by the fall in sales of fuel during the heatwave in July 2022, as shown in our [Retail sales, Great Britain: July 2022 bulletin](#).

### Figure 3: Nearly 7 in 10 (69%) adults report spending less on non-essentials as people continue to cut back spending

Proportion of adults taking actions because of increases in the cost of living, Great Britain, December 2021 to February 2023

### Figure 3: Nearly 7 in 10 (69%) adults report spending less on non-essentials as people continue to cut back spending

Proportion of adults taking actions because of increases in the cost of living, Great Britain, December 2021 to February 2023



Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS) – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN)

#### Notes:

1. Question: "Which of these, if any, are you doing because of the increases in the cost of living?".
2. Base: Adults who said their cost of living has increased over the last month until the period 14 to 25 September from which the base is all adults.
3. Because of changes in the base of the question, there is a break in the time series from the period 14 to 25 September 2022.
4. Respondents were able to choose more than one option.
5. Not all response options are included in this chart. Please see the datasets associated with this release for estimates for each option.

### Keeping warm this winter

In this period, we asked adults how worried they were about keeping warm in their home this winter:

- around half (51%) reported being very or somewhat worried (51% in the previous period)
- around a quarter (24%) reported being neither worried nor unworried (26% in the previous period)
- around 1 in 4 (23%) reported being somewhat unworried or not at all worried (21% in the previous period)

The level of worry during these periods may have been because of the extension of [cold weather alerts \(explained in this GOV.UK article\)](#).

## Household finances

In the latest period, around 1 in 6 (16%) adults reported that they did not have savings (16% in the previous period). Around 1 in 14 (7%) adults reported that they had a direct debit, a standing order, or bill that they were unable to pay in the past month (7% in the previous period).

## Energy bills

Just under half (47%) of adults who pay energy bills said they found it very or somewhat difficult to afford them in the latest period (46% in the previous period).

There are strong seasonal spending patterns relating to gas and electricity that may affect these results. For more information on this and recent price rises for gas and electricity, please see our latest [Consumer price inflation. UK: December 2022 data release](#).

## Rent or mortgage payments

Around 3 in 10 (31%) adults who are currently making rent or mortgage payments reported that these payments have gone up in the last six months (31% in the previous period).

Of those who are currently making rent or mortgage payments, a similar percentage (30%) reported that they are finding it very or somewhat difficult to afford these payments (30% in the previous period).

Our 9 January 2023 release [How increases in housing costs impact households](#) looks at how increasing interest rates and rental costs will affect mortgage holders and renters in 2023.

# 4 . Personal well-being and loneliness

## Personal well-being

This period, we continued to ask respondents about their personal well-being. Average levels of personal well-being were:

- life satisfaction: 6.8 in the latest period (6.8 in the previous period)
- feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile: 7.2 in the latest period (7.2 in the previous period)
- happiness: 6.9 in the latest period (6.8 in the previous period)
- anxiety: 4.0 in the latest period (4.1 in the previous period)

Our [Personal well-being quarterly estimates technical report](#) provides more information on the seasonal variation associated with measures of personal well-being. You can learn more about the Measures of National Well-being from our [Quality of life in the UK: February 2023 bulletin](#) and our [Measures of National Well-being dashboard](#), which provides longer-term trends in well-being since 2012.

## Figure 4: Levels of personal well-being

Adults in Great Britain, March 2020 to February 2023



## Notes:

1. Questions included: "Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?", "Overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are worthwhile?", "Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?", and "Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?".
2. These questions are answered on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is "not at all" and 10 is "completely".
3. Base: all adults.

Download this chart

[.xlsx](#)

## Loneliness

Just over a quarter (27%) of adults reported feeling lonely either always, often, or some of the time (25% in the previous period).

Looking more closely at feelings of loneliness, 7% of adults reported feeling lonely always or often. Younger adults reported higher levels of loneliness; the proportion of adults reporting to feel lonely always or often decreased with age:

- 10% aged 16 to 29 years
- 8% aged 30 to 49 years
- 7% aged 50 to 69 years
- 3% aged 70 years and over

You can find out more about demographic breakdowns for loneliness in our article [Mapping loneliness during the coronavirus pandemic](#).

For further estimates on people's personal well-being and loneliness, including breakdowns by age, sex and trends over time, please see our [Personal well-being and loneliness dataset](#).

## 5 . Working arrangements

### Location of work

The proportion of working adults who travelled to work at some point in the past seven days increased slightly to 71% (68% in the previous period).

This includes:

- 44% who only travelled to work in the past seven days (43% in the previous period)
- 27% who reported both working from home and travelling to work (hybrid working) in the past seven days (25% in the previous period)

Around 14% of working adults said they worked from home exclusively in the past seven days (14% in the previous period). A further 16% neither travelled to work nor worked from home (18% in the previous period).

## Industrial action and its impact on work

In the latest period, 43% of adults reported industrial action as an important issue in the UK today.

During this period, we asked a new question about whether people had missed work because of industrial action in the past seven days. It is worth noting that while our survey period covers 25 January to 5 February 2023, the majority of responses would have been received before the industrial action that took place on 1 February 2023.

We found that around 1 in 30 (3%) working adults said that they had missed work due to industrial action, compared with 97% who said they had not missed work. This includes those taking part in industrial action, as well as those affected by industrial action. There did not appear to be any differences between the sexes, with both 3% of men and women reporting having missed work due to industrial action.

## Cost of living and its impact on work

We also asked a question about actions currently being taken by working adults because of increases in the cost of living. Just under 1 in 5 reported that they are looking for a job that pays more money, including a promotion (19%), and working more hours than usual in their main job (17%). These estimates have remained relatively stable since the last time this question was asked in the period 25 December 2022 to 8 January 2023 (20% and 17%, respectively).

## 6 . Actions taken to reduce the spread of illness

Estimates regarding the actions taken to reduce the spread and the social impacts of illnesses (including coronavirus (COVID-19) and other illnesses such as coughs, colds and flu), with trends over time and breakdowns by age and sex, can be found in our [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) and other illnesses dataset](#).

### More about coronavirus

- Find the latest on [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) in the UK](#).
- [Explore the latest coronavirus data](#) from the ONS and other sources.
- View [all coronavirus data](#).

## 7 . Public opinions and social trends data

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

Dataset | Released 10 February 2023

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) of people's experiences of changes in their cost of living and household finances in Great Britain.

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

Dataset | Released 10 February 2023

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) of worries, personal well-being, and loneliness in Great Britain.

### [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: working arrangements](#)

Dataset | Released 10 February 2023

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) related to the working arrangements of people in Great Britain.

### [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: personal experiences of shortages of goods](#)

Dataset | Released 10 February 2023

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) of whether people experienced shortages of goods such as food, medicine, or fuel when shopping in Great Britain.

### [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: coronavirus \(COVID-19\) and other illnesses](#)

Dataset | Released 10 February 2023

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) related to the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and other illnesses on people, households, and communities in Great Britain.

## 8 . Measuring the data

This release contains data and indicators from a module being undertaken through the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

Breakdowns by age and sex, including [confidence intervals](#) for the estimates, are contained in our [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain datasets](#).

Where changes in results from previous weeks are presented in this bulletin or comparisons between estimates are made, associated confidence intervals should be used to assess the [statistical significance](#) of the differences.

### Sampling and weighting

In the latest period (25 January to 5 February 2023), we sampled 4,988 households. This sample was randomly selected from those who had previously completed the Labour Market Survey (LMS) or OPN. The responding sample for the latest period contained 2,742 individuals, representing a 55% response rate.

Survey weights were applied to make estimates representative of the population (based on ONS population estimates). 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

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

Article | Released 30 January 2023

Latest insights from our new winter survey providing monthly updates on how increases in the cost of living and difficulty accessing NHS services are impacting people's lives during the autumn and winter months.

### [Cost of living insights](#)

Web page | Updated frequently

A live roundup of the latest data and trends about the cost of living. Explore changes to the cost of everyday items and how this is affecting people.

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

Article | Released 25 October 2022

Analysis of the proportion of the population that is 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.

### [How increases in housing costs impact households](#)

Article | Released 9 January 2023

Mortgage interest rates started to increase during 2022, this is likely to make borrowing more expensive for those with fixed rates deals coming to an end in 2023. Those with variable rate mortgages and private renters are also facing higher housing costs.

### [Census 2021: how homes are heated in your area](#)

Article | Released 5 January 2023

As more than half of adults report worry about keeping warm this winter, we explore how homes are heated across England and Wales.

### [Cost of living and depression in adults, Great Britain: 29 September to 23 October 2022](#)

Article | Released 6 December 2022

Analysis into the prevalence of depression among adults in Great Britain in autumn 2022. Exploring this in the context of the rising cost of living.

### [Quality of life in the UK: February 2023](#)

Bulletin | Released 10 February 2023

An update on UK's progress across 10 domains of national well-being: personal well-being, relationships, health, what we do, where we live, personal finance, economy, education and skills, governance, and the environment.

### [COVID-19 question bank](#)

Web page | Updated frequently

Government Statistical Service page that provides a bank of questions from multiple Office for National Statistics (ONS) surveys related to COVID-19 to be used in other surveys to further support harmonisation and questionnaire development. This bank also provides users with an understanding of what data the ONS has in relation to the coronavirus pandemic.

## 10 . Cite this statistical bulletin

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