

Statistical bulletin

Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: October 2024

Social insights on daily life and events, including important issues, cost of living and the NHS, from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

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1 . Main points

The following information is from data collected from 2 to 27 October 2024, based on adults in Great Britain.

- When asked about the important issues facing the UK today, the most commonly reported issues were the NHS (85%), the cost of living (84%), the economy (69%), crime (60%), immigration (58%) and housing (58%).
- Around half of adults (53%) reported that their cost of living had increased in the past month, and just under half (45%) reported it had stayed the same.
- The most commonly reported reasons given by adults in the latest period for a rise in their cost of living remain the prices of their food shop (90%), gas and electricity bills (72%) and fuel (32%); this has been the case since we first asked the question in November 2021.
- Around a third of adults (35%) reported finding it very or somewhat difficult to afford their rent and mortgage payments; a similar proportion of adults (33%) reported finding it very or somewhat difficult to afford their energy bills.

2 . Important issues facing the UK

Estimates in this section of the release are based on data collected between 2 and 27 October 2024 (the "latest period").

The NHS (85%) and the cost of living (84%) have remained the two most commonly reported important issues facing the UK today. Both measures have remained relatively stable since we first started asking the question in October 2022.

The proportion of adults reporting the NHS as an important issue has remained relatively stable since October 2022, while those reporting the cost of living as an important issue have decreased slightly (from 93% between 26 October and 6 November 2022 to 84% in the latest period).

The proportion of adults reporting the economy (69%) as an important issue has gradually fallen over the two years, from 79% in October 2022. The proportions of adults reporting crime (60%) and immigration (58%) as an important issue have increased since October 2022, when these proportions were 49% and 43%, respectively (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The NHS, the cost of living, 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 October 2024

Notes:

1. Question: "What do you think are important issues facing the UK today?".
2. Base: All adults.
3. Respondents could select more than one option, estimates and associated confidence intervals for all response categories are provided in the datasets associated with this release.
4. The length of each data collection period presented in this time series may be different.

Estimates of important issues by age group are available for all time periods collected in Table 25 of our [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: personal well-being and loneliness dataset](#) provided with this release.

Climate change and the environment

In the latest period, around 6 in 10 (57%) adults reported climate change and the environment as an important issue, compared with a recent high of 69% between 26 July and 6 August 2023.

Our analysis on [Public and business attitudes to the environment and climate change, Great Britain: 2024](#) looks at individuals' and businesses' attitudes towards climate change and the environment using data from our Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) and Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS).

Using pooled OPN data, covering the period August to October 2024, this analysis found that the groups of the population who appeared more likely to report climate change and the environment as an important issue included:

- adults working in professional occupations (67%)
- adults with a degree or equivalent (66%)
- those living in the least deprived areas of England (61%)
- women (60%)

Employment

In the latest period, around 4 in 10 (37%) adults reported employment as an important issue; this was at its highest earlier this year (44% of adults) between 14 and 25 February 2024.

Since the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, many workers follow a hybrid working pattern (part travelling to work, part at home). Our OPN data, covering the period 2 to 27 October 2024, found that 28% of workers were hybrid working. Our [Characteristics of hybrid workers, Great Britain 2024](#) analysis looks at the types of workers most likely to be following a hybrid working pattern using our [working arrangements](#) dataset.

3 . Adults in Great Britain’s experiences of the cost of living

The cost of living continues to be one of the most commonly reported issues among adults in Great Britain.

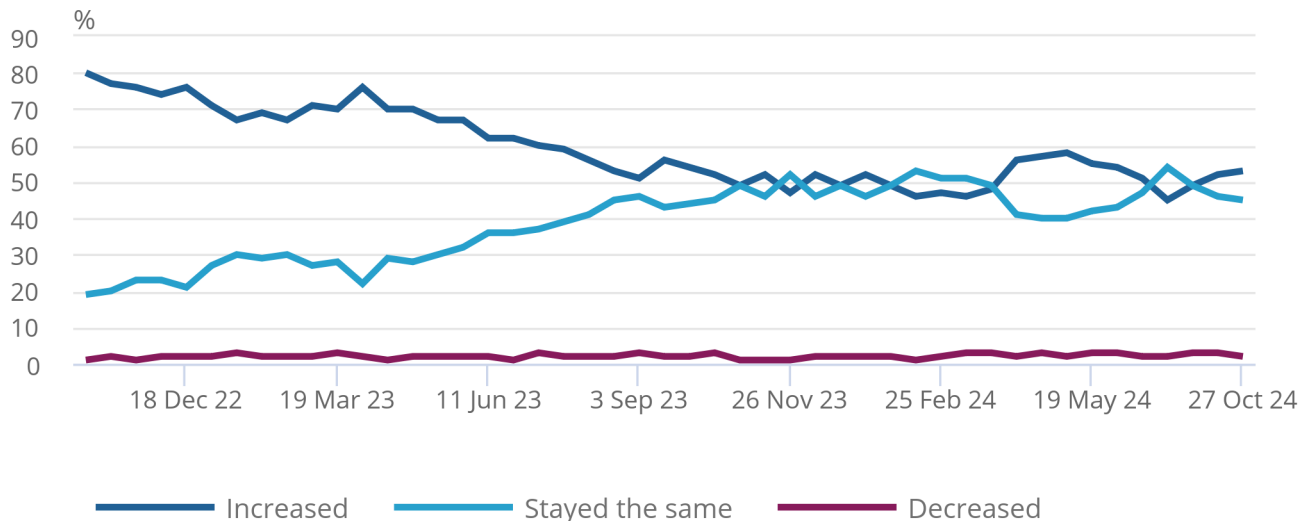
In the latest period, 53% of adults said their cost of living had increased compared with one month ago (45% said it had stayed the same and 2% said it had decreased). The proportion of adults reporting that their cost of living had increased has gradually decreased since the highest peak in October 2022, when 80% of adults reported this (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Adults reporting increases in their cost of living have fallen since October 2022, while those reporting that their cost of living has stayed the same have increased over the same period

Proportion of adults reporting changes to their cost of living in the past month, Great Britain, October 2022 to October 2024

Figure 2: Adults reporting increases in their cost of living have fallen since October 2022, while those reporting that their cost of living has stayed the same have increased over the same period

Proportion of adults reporting changes to their cost of living in the past month, Great Britain, October 2022 to October 2024



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

Notes:

1. Question: “Has your cost of living changed compared to one month ago?”.
2. Base: All adults.
3. In the period 27 March to 7 April 2024 changes were made to the survey design to allow us to measure the short- and long-term impacts of the cost of living. These may have had an impact on responses to this question.
4. The length of each data collection period presented in this time series may be different.
5. Percentages may not sum to 100% because of rounding.

Estimates of the cost of living by age group are available for all time periods collected in Tables 4, 5 and 13 of our [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: household finances dataset](#) provided with this release.

Reasons for cost of living increases

The most commonly reported reason given by adults in the latest period for a rise in their cost of living remains the price of their food shop (90%). This has been the case since we first asked the question in November 2021 (Figure 3).

Around 7 in 10 (72%) adults reported that increases in their cost of living are because the cost of their gas and electricity bills has increased. This proportion has risen since July (45% in the period 5 to 28 July 2024) but remains lower than the height seen at the start of 2024, at 85% in the period 4 to 14 January 2024. This trend may be partly explained by seasonal patterns in energy use.

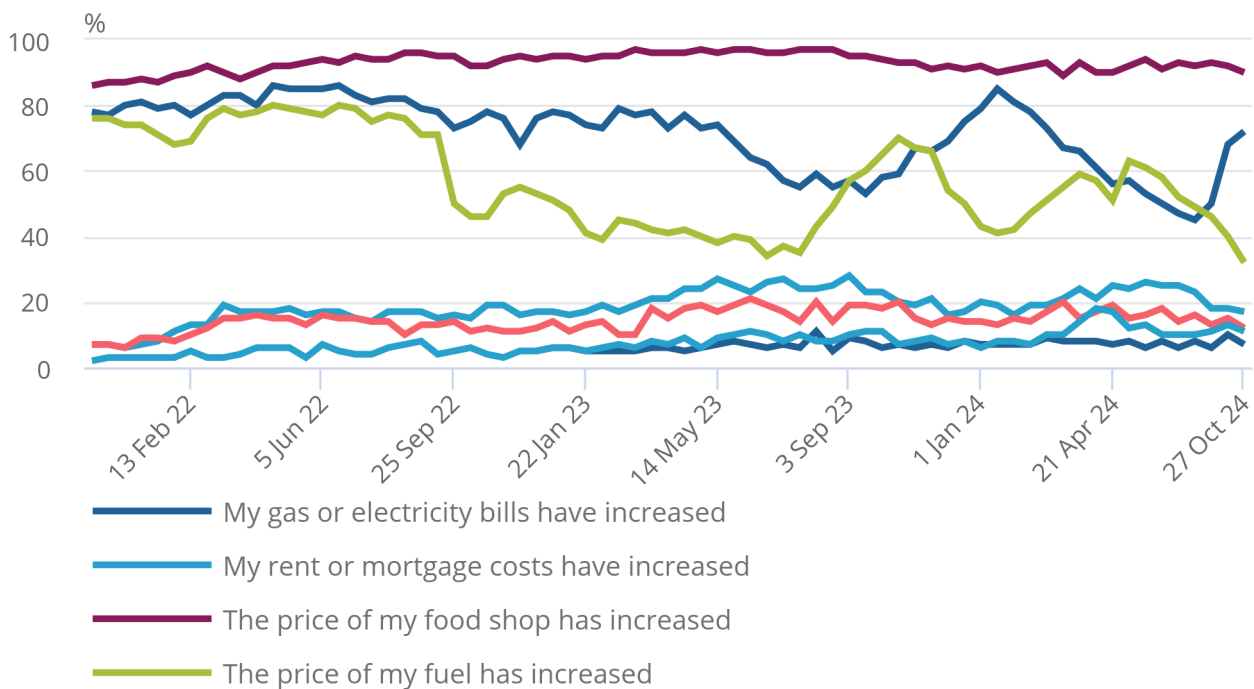
In the latest period, around a third (32%) of adults reported the price of fuel as a reason for their cost of living increasing. This proportion has fallen since the height in May 2024 (63%) and is now lower than the proportion at the start of 2024 (41% in the period 4 to 14 January 2024). For more information on fuel prices please see the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero [weekly fuel price release](#).

Figure 3: The price of a food shop has remained the most commonly reported reason for cost of living increases since November 2021

Proportion of adults reporting reasons for increases in their cost of living, Great Britain, November 2021 to October 2024

Figure 3: The price of a food shop has remained the most commonly reported reason for cost of living increases since November 2021

Proportion of adults reporting reasons for increases in their cost of living, Great Britain, November 2021 to October 2024



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

Notes:

1. Question: "Over the last month, in which ways has your cost of living increased?"
2. Base: Adults who had reported their cost of living had increased in the past month.
3. associated confidence intervals for all response categories are provided in the [datasets associated with this release](#).

4 . Affordability of household expenses

In the latest period, around 4 in 10 (38%) adults who are currently making rent or mortgage payments reported that these payments had gone up in the last six months, with 35% reporting that they are finding it very or somewhat difficult to afford these payments.

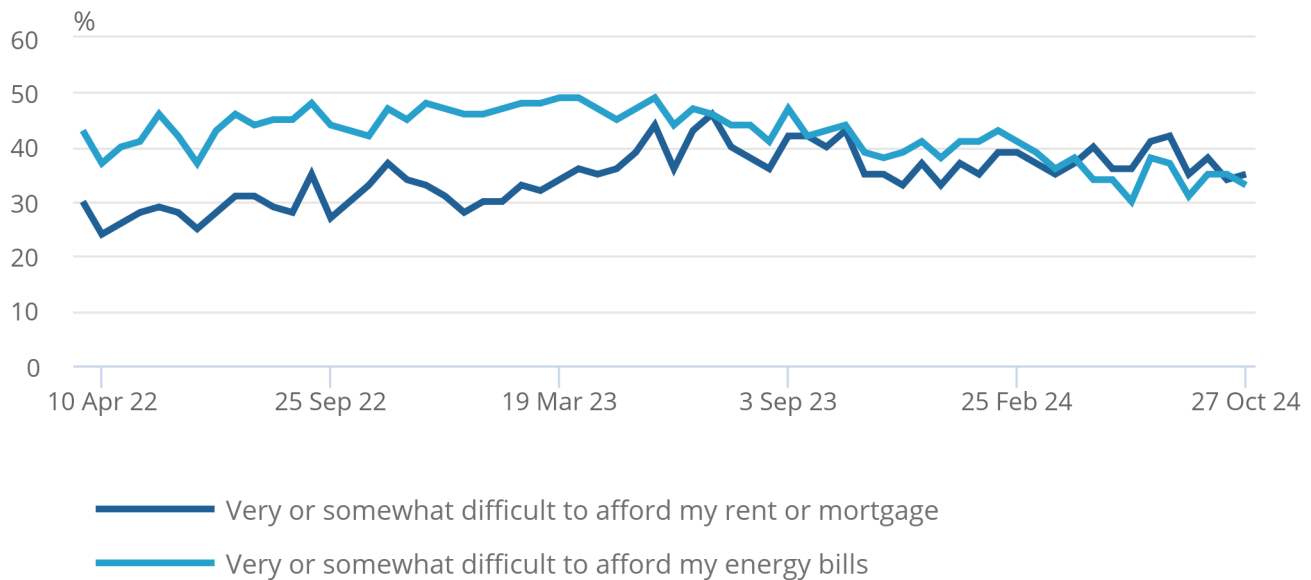
The proportion reporting difficulty affording rent or mortgage payments has increased slightly from March 2022 (30% in the period 16 to 27 March 2022). In contrast, those finding it very or somewhat difficult to afford their energy bills have decreased from 43% in the period 16 to 27 March 2022 to 33% in the latest period (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Over 3 in 10 adults are finding it difficult to pay their energy or housing bills

Proportion of adults who find it difficult to pay energy bills, rent or mortgage, Great Britain, September 2022 to October 2024

Figure 4: Over 3 in 10 adults are finding it difficult to pay their energy or housing bills

Proportion of adults who find it difficult to pay energy bills, rent or mortgage, Great Britain, September 2022 to October 2024



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

Notes:

1. Questions: "How easy or difficult is it to afford your energy bills?" and "How easy or difficult is it to afford your rent or mortgage payments?".
2. Base: adults who pay for energy bills and adults who pay rent or mortgage.
3. From 17 to 29 May 2023, changes were made to the survey design to allow us to route to the questions on rent and mortgage payments more accurately. This change does not appear to have had an impact on responses to this question.
4. From 16 to 27 March 2022, changes were made to the survey design to allow us to route to the questions on energy payments more accurately. This change does not appear to have had an impact on responses to this question.
5. Estimates and associated confidence intervals for all response categories are available in the datasets associated with this release.
6. The length of each data collection period presented in this time series may differ.

5 . Data on public opinions and social trends

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

Dataset | Released 15 November 2024

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 15 November 2024

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) of personal well-being, loneliness and what people in Great Britain felt were important issues.

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

Dataset | Released 15 November 2024

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) on the experiences of being on an NHS hospital waiting list for adults in Great Britain.

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

Dataset | Released 11 November 2024

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: social mobility](#)

Dataset | Released 15 November 2024

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) of the extent to which people in Great Britain agree they have done better in life than their parents, that children will have a better future than the current generation, that everyone has a fair chance or that their background influences their outcomes in life.

6 . Data sources and quality

The analysis in this bulletin is based on adults aged 16 years and over in Great Britain. Data referring to the "latest period" are based on 3,960 responding adults for the period 2 to 27 October 2024.

In the latest period, we sampled 8,402 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 3,960 individuals, representing a 47% 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).

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

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

[Characteristics of hybrid workers, Great Britain, 2024](#)

Dataset | Released 11 November 2024

Data on location of work by different breakdowns and time spent for working adults in Great Britain. Survey data from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN), Time Use Survey (TUS) and Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS).

[Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators: 14 November 2024](#)

Bulletin | Released 14 November 2024

Early 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.

[Impact of increased cost of living on adults across Great Britain: July to October 2023](#)

Article | Released 4 December 2023

Analysis of the groups of the population affected by recent increases in the cost of living using data from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey and of the characteristics associated with financial resilience from the Wealth and Assets Survey.

[Private rent and house prices, UK: October 2024](#)

Bulletin | Released 16 October 2024

The Price Index of Private Rents (PIPR) produces rent price and inflation statistics for the UK, tracking prices paid for new and existing tenancies in the private rental sector. Includes headline UK House Price Index statistics.

[Retail sales, Great Britain: September 2024](#)

Bulletin | Released 18 October 2024

The Retail Sales Index (RSI) is an important economic indicator and one of the earliest short-term measures of economic activity.

[Public awareness, opinions and attitudes towards artificial intelligence: July to October 2023](#)

Bulletin | Released 30 October 2023

An analysis exploring adults' awareness of artificial intelligence (AI) use and attitudes towards the adoption of AI, including benefits and risks.

[Public and business attitudes to the environment and climate change, Great Britain: 2024](#)

Bulletin | Released 13 November 2024

Insights on individuals' and businesses' attitudes towards climate change and the environment using data from our Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) and Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS).

8 . Cite this statistical bulletin

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