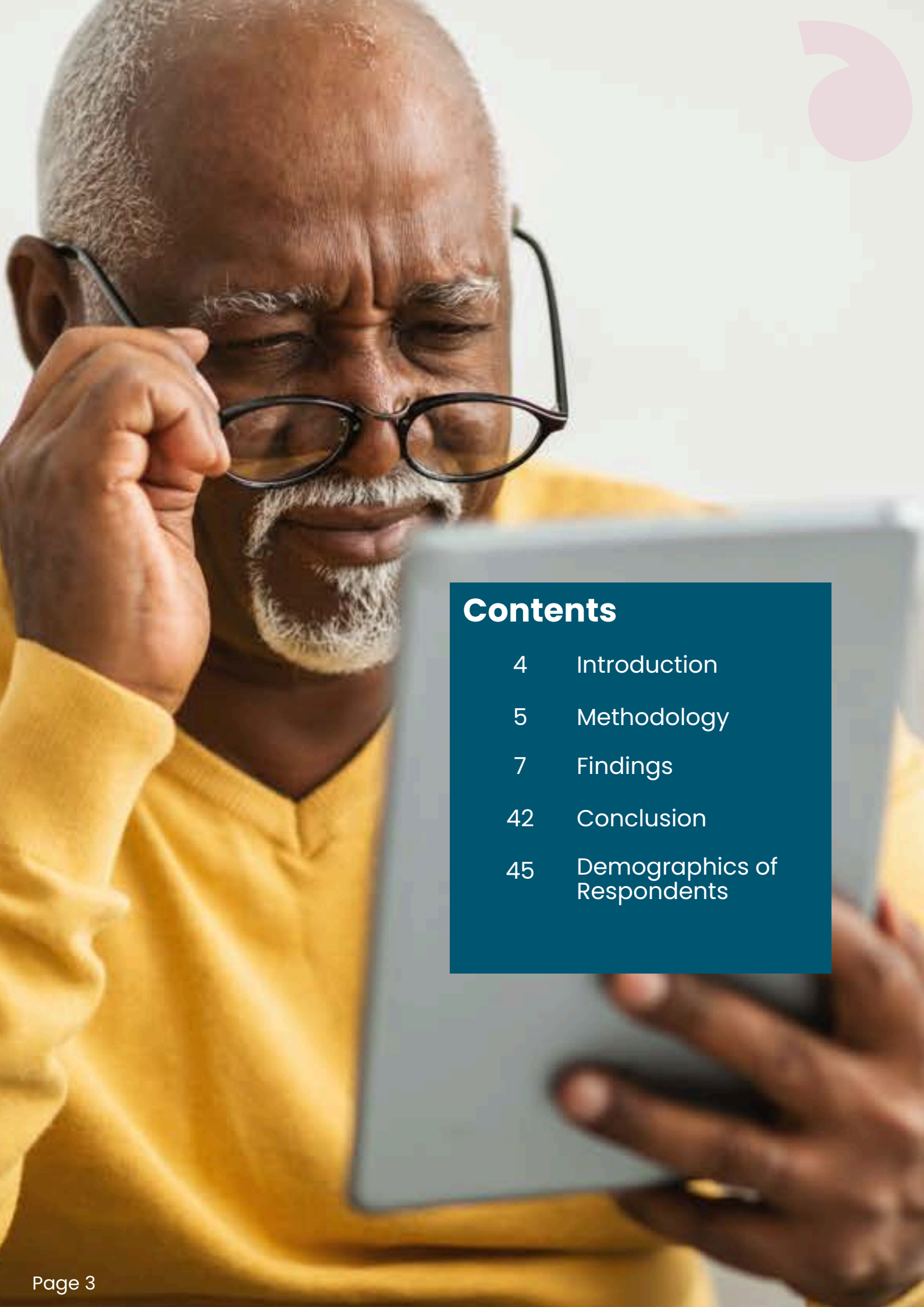


Cost of Living Report

Published September 2024



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Introduction

Healthwatch Tameside is the independent consumer champion for health and social care in Tameside. We listen to local people and gather information about their experiences of using health and social care services.

As a statutory watchdog, our role is to ensure that local decision makers put the experiences of people at the heart of their care, so that those who buy (commissioners) and provide services (NHS Trusts, GPs, the voluntary sector, and independent providers) can benefit from what Tameside people tell us.

In this report, we share the work we have done to understand how the rising cost of living is impacting people living in Tameside. In particular we wanted to get a better idea of how it is affecting people's health, both mental and physical.

Understanding how people are being affected by the rising costs of living will help the health and care system in Tameside to direct resources and information to those in most need. It will also help to understand any gaps in existing support.

In addition, using the feedback from people's experiences, we can highlight the true impact of the rising cost of living on the health of Tameside residents and feed in to national work on the health impacts of rising costs.



Methodology

Healthwatch Tameside conducted a survey to help assess the impact of the rising cost of living on the health and wellbeing of our local communities and whether it has affected how we use health and social care services in Tameside.

The survey was available for completion from March 2023 to August 2023. The survey was promoted to members of the public via our e-newsletter, social media, and at engagement events.

The survey was available in both online and paper format. There were 331 responses to the survey. 295 respondents gave their location; 278 lived in Tameside, 17 lived elsewhere.



Responses

There were 331 responses to the survey. 295 respondents gave their location; 278 lived in Tameside, 17 lived elsewhere.

Male respondents were underrepresented when compared with local demographics; the reasons for this should be considered to inform future work in this area.

Overall there was good representation from all age groups except the 16 to 25 group, with the highest number of responses from the 36 to 50 age group. 30% of respondents described themselves as disabled, 20% of respondents described themselves as an unpaid carer.

There was underrepresentation of ethnicities other than White British. The reason for this should be considered to inform future work in this area. Responses on sexual orientation align with local demographics.

Further detail can be found in the Demographics section.



Financial Situation

We asked people how their financial situation had changed over the last 6 months.

322 responded and 79% stated it had worsened. Only 4% felt it had improved.

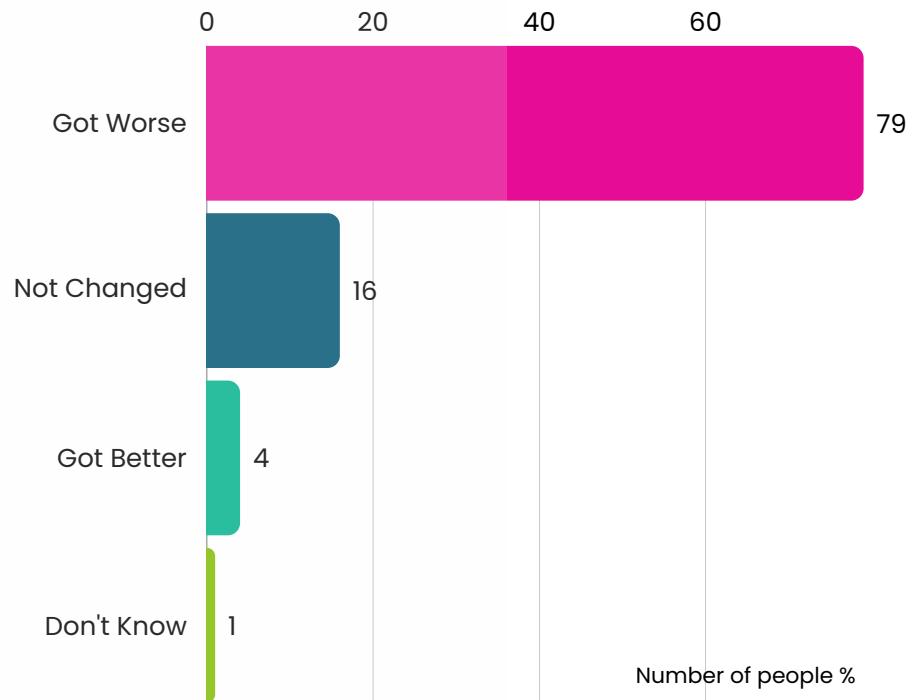


Figure 1. A bar chart to show how respondents' financial situation has changed over the last 6 months. This was answered by 322 respondents.

Respondents have very clearly articulated that they are in a worse financial situation overall than they were 6 months previously.

It is making it hard for me to buy fresh food to be able to promote healthy living for me and my family. This in turn does not help with my moods and that has an effect on the rest of my family.

Impact on Physical Health

322 people responded when we asked about the impact of their financial situation on their physical health. 62% felt their physical health had got worse, and only 2% felt it had improved. 62% of respondents (198 responses) reported that their physical health had deteriorated over the last 6 months.

A number of themes emerged from the comments from those respondents:

Deterioration in long-term conditions

Respondents indicated they had existing conditions that had deteriorated over the last 6 months. Some stated the cost of living crisis was contributing to their physical health deteriorating.

Impact on mental wellbeing

Although the question asked about physical health, a significant number of comments were mainly about people's deteriorating mental wellbeing which was directly related to the increased cost of living.

New physical health conditions

Some mentioned new conditions that had developed; comments referred to increased coughs and colds, but there were also a number of comments from women who had recently given birth.

Keeping fit & healthy

Some people said they could not afford to pay for things that keep them fit and healthy, such as gyms or fitness centres, and that they could no longer eat as healthy a diet as they had previously.

Getting the right help

7 comments reflected challenges in getting the right help to maintain their physical health, mostly around finding it harder to get an appointment with their GP.

I am housebound most of the time, due to progressive rheumatoid arthritis. Economising on my heating causes my condition to become more painful and as a result my mobility becomes more limited.

322 people responded when we asked about the impact of their financial situation on their physical health. 62% felt their physical health had got worse, and only 2% felt it had improved.

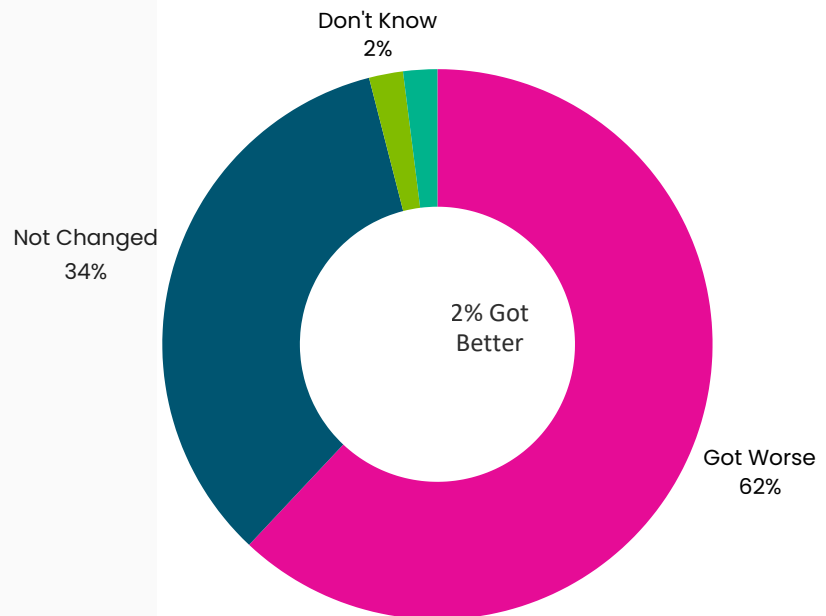


Figure 2. A pie chart to show the impact of respondents' financial situation on their physical health.

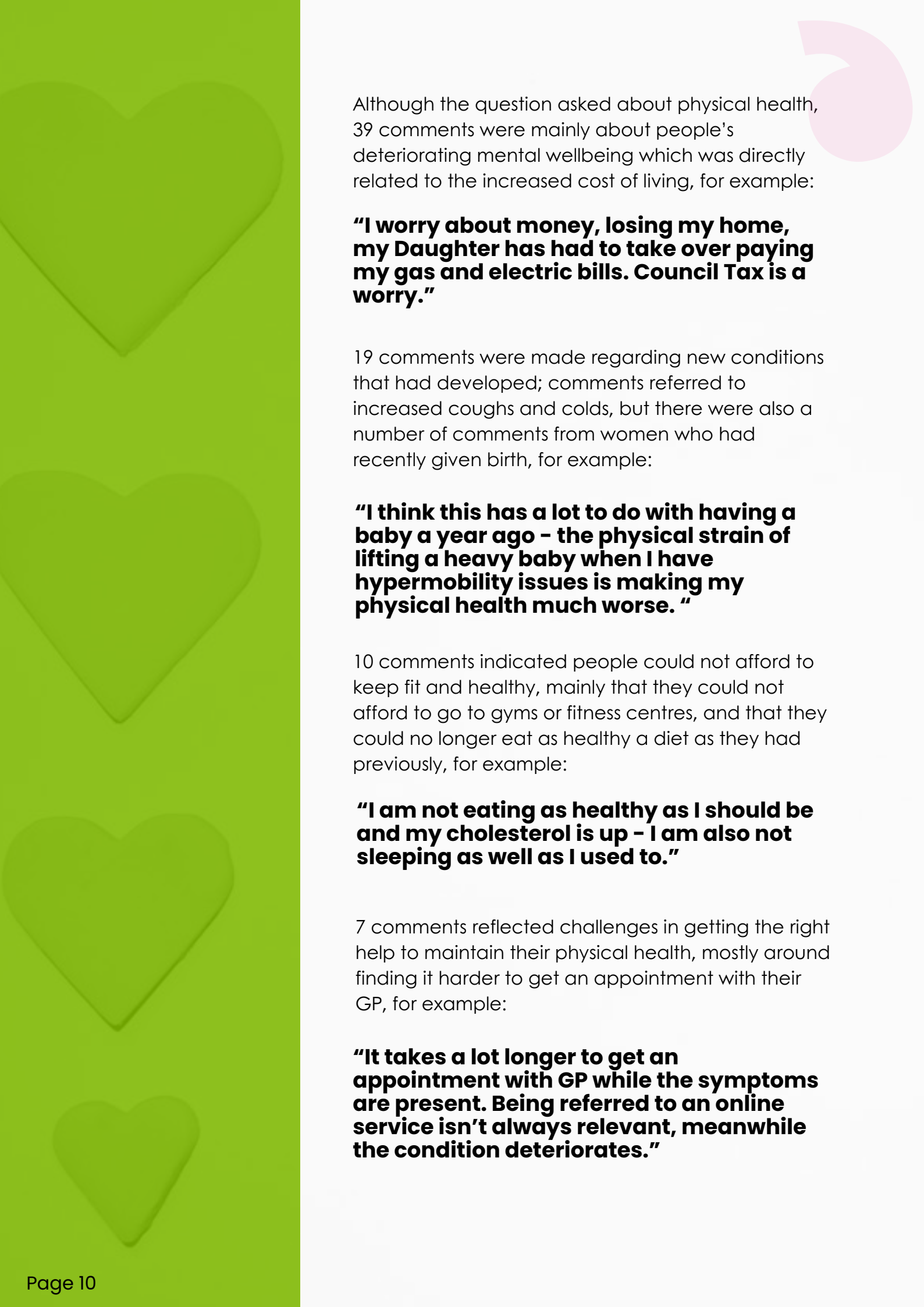
198 respondents made up the 62% who felt that their physical health had got worse. When asked for more details, 117 of them responded and a number of themes emerged.

33 comments indicated they had existing conditions that had deteriorated over the last 6 months.

Comments included a wide range of long-term conditions, but 25 comments did not indicate that the deterioration was due to the cost of living.

There were 8 comments that indicated the cost of living crisis was contributing to their physical health deteriorating, for example:

“I have a condition called fibromyalgia, which worsens with stress. It’s been a matter of heating or eating for me. The food banks are the only thing getting me through.”



Although the question asked about physical health, 39 comments were mainly about people's deteriorating mental wellbeing which was directly related to the increased cost of living, for example:

“I worry about money, losing my home, my Daughter has had to take over paying my gas and electric bills. Council Tax is a worry.”

19 comments were made regarding new conditions that had developed; comments referred to increased coughs and colds, but there were also a number of comments from women who had recently given birth, for example:

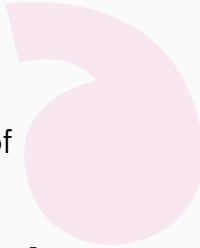

“I think this has a lot to do with having a baby a year ago - the physical strain of lifting a heavy baby when I have hypermobility issues is making my physical health much worse.”

10 comments indicated people could not afford to keep fit and healthy, mainly that they could not afford to go to gyms or fitness centres, and that they could no longer eat as healthy a diet as they had previously, for example:

“I am not eating as healthy as I should be and my cholesterol is up - I am also not sleeping as well as I used to.”

7 comments reflected challenges in getting the right help to maintain their physical health, mostly around finding it harder to get an appointment with their GP, for example:

“It takes a lot longer to get an appointment with GP while the symptoms are present. Being referred to an online service isn't always relevant, meanwhile the condition deteriorates.”



10 comments talked about the general impact of their financial situation, for example:

“When one of our pensions is gone on rent, and we've got everything else to come out of the other it doesn't matter how good a juggler you are, things just don't go.”

There were 14 comments from the 108 respondents that felt there had been no significant change.

Despite not reporting any change in their physical health, 6 out of the 14 comments indicated that they were experiencing challenges with similar themes emerging as those that felt their physical health had deteriorated.

8 respondents felt they didn't know; we asked for more information, for example:

“I've got more fit but I have had trouble sleeping which is affecting my physical health.”

8 people made up the 2% that felt their physical health had got better, for example:

“I have been off work since January. I follow exercise routines almost on a daily basis by going on walks or long walks. Whenever possible, I have been to swim and plan to carry this on during the upcoming months of Summer.”

Impact on Mental Health

60% of respondents stated that their mental health had got worse over the previous six months. This took the form of:

- Experiencing mental health issues impacted specifically by the cost of living such as anxiety about paying household bills, food and childcare.
- Experiencing mental health issues for the first time but not specifying that this was due to the cost of living, with some comments citing bereavement, menopause, physical conditions or family issues as the cause.
- Existing mental health issues that have deteriorated during the previous six months.
- Difficulties in accessing the right help such as GP, hospital or housing support as a reason for their deteriorating mental wellbeing.

319 people responded when we asked how their mental health had been affected over the last 6 months. The majority (60%) felt that their mental health had deteriorated. 35% felt their mental health had not changed at all, 3% felt it had improved, and 2% didn't know.

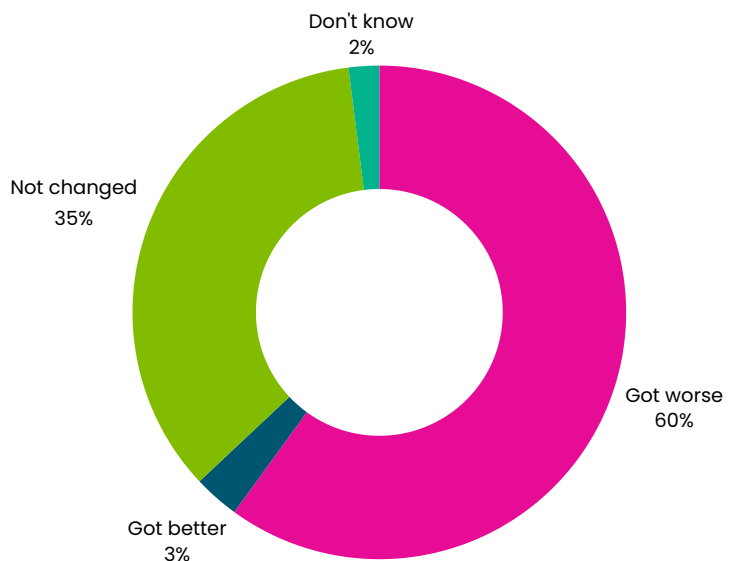



Figure 3. A pie chart to show how respondents' mental health has been affected over the last 6 months.

My mental health has deteriorated as I can't afford to go out and do things with my family, and also due to worsening health problems.



Of the 191 respondents who stated their mental health had got worse, 109 made further comments. There were a range of themes within these comments.

40 comments indicated respondents were experiencing mental health issues for the first time but did not specify that this was due to the cost of living, with some comments citing bereavement, menopause, physical conditions or family issues as the cause.

Many comments referred to:

- Feeling stressed
- Low mood
- Anxiety
- Trouble sleeping
- Irritability

53 comments talked about experiencing mental health issues impacted specifically by the cost of living, such as anxiety about paying household bills, food, and childcare, for example:

“Due to amount of increased cost, I have to work two jobs to have enough, and that doesn't give me enough time to do any physical exercises or enjoy my leisure time, which has taken a toll on my mental health. I am constantly thinking about work and taking on extra shifts to meet the monthly financial expenditure.”

Impact on Services to Keep Fit and Healthy

We asked respondents whether they had done any of the following over the past 6 months, due to the rising cost of living:

- Changed, cut down or stopped support from paid carers (e.g. people coming into the home to help with preparing meals or washing and dressing).
- Changed, cut down or stopped support from services that they pay privately for, such as physiotherapy, earwax removal, podiatry, or counselling.
- Changed, cut down or stopped other support they pay for that helps their health and wellbeing.
- Stopped a special diet needed for a medical condition because of the cost.

4% of respondents stated they had changed, cut down or stopped support from paid carers, particularly with cleaning. 21% of respondents stated they had changed, cut down or stopped support from services that they pay privately for, such as:

- Toenail cutting
- Physiotherapy, chiropractic therapy and sports massage
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), psychology and counselling
- Speech and occupational therapy for children
- Optician

28% of respondents stated they had changed, cut down or stopped other support they pay for that helps their health and wellbeing. Most comments referred to having to reduce or stop going to the gym or doing other exercise due to the costs, including travel costs.

Some comments stated that they had reduced socialising with friends and family due to costs, and they thought that this might have an impact on their mental wellbeing.

I no longer pay for support, I have a friend who is unwell and we provide mutual support for each other.

14% of respondents stated they had changed, cut down or stopped a special diet needed for a medical condition because of the cost, with respondents mostly saying they had had to reduce or change their diet due to cost, even though this might impact on their health.

21% of respondents stated they had changed, cut down or stopped support from services that they pay privately for. It was not applicable for 54%. Of the 67 comments received from respondents, 23 concerned this issue.

309 people responded when asked if they had changed, cut down or stopped support from paid carers (e.g. people coming into the home to help with preparing meals or washing or dressing).

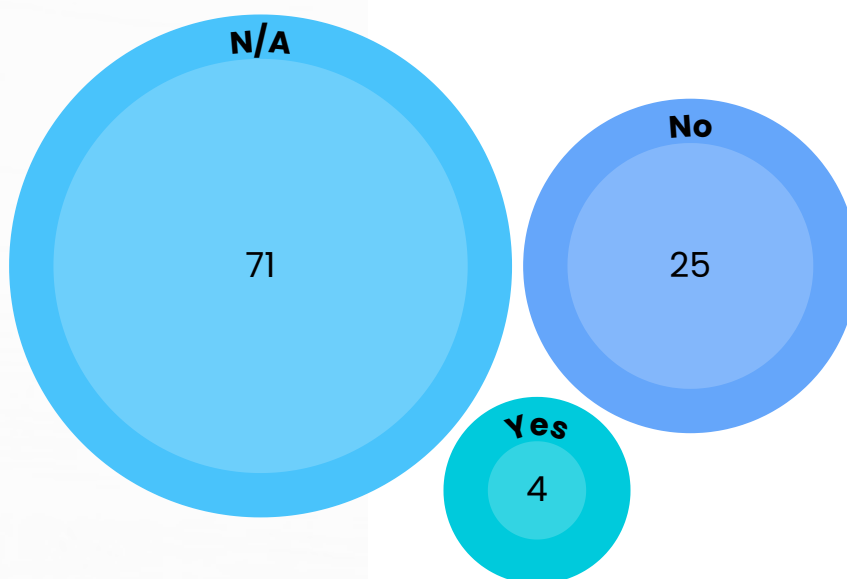


Figure 4. A pie chart to show the percentage of respondents that have changed, cut down or stopped support from paid carers.

4% of respondents stated they had changed, cut down or stopped support from paid carers. It was not applicable for 71%.

“I need a cleaner as I am disabled and struggle to bend or stretch. I have had to reduce cleaners’ hours due to costs.”

309 people responded when asked if they had changed, cut down or stopped support from services that they pay privately for, such as physiotherapy, earwax removal, podiatry, or counselling.

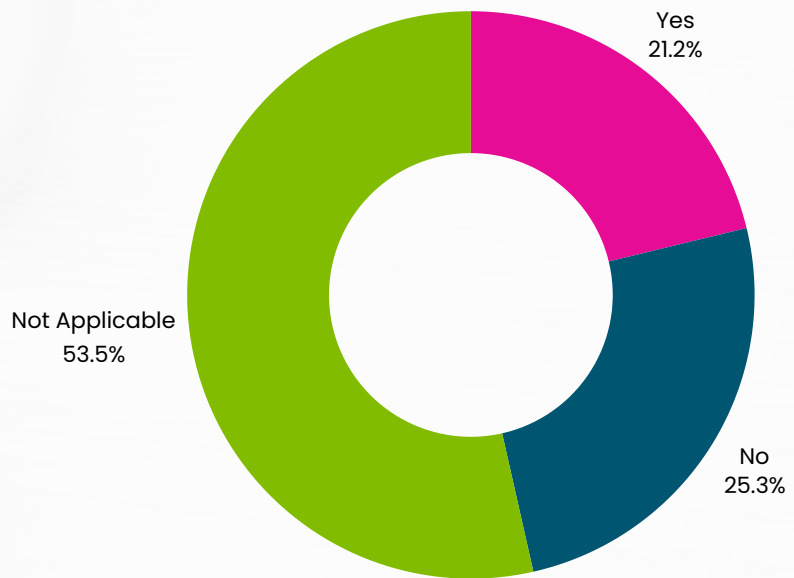


Figure 5. A pie chart to show the percentage of respondents that have changed, cut down or stopped support from services that they pay privately for.

21% of respondents stated they had changed, cut down or stopped support from services that they pay privately for. It was not applicable for 54%. Of the 67 comments received from respondents, 23 concerned this issue, for example:

“Restricted podiatry sessions as they can cost between £30 and £40, which is sometimes a problem as I cannot cut my own toenails, due to diabetes and poor eyesight. Was referred by GP to hospital Podiatry Service but they would not cut nails, told me to pay privately. ”

Most comments referred to having to reduce or stop going to the gym or other exercise due to the costs, including travel costs. Some comments stated that they had reduced socialising with friends and family due to cost and that this might have an impact on their mental wellbeing.

Out of 308 responses, 28% stated they had changed, cut down or stopped other support they pay for that helps their health and wellbeing. It was not applicable for 46%.

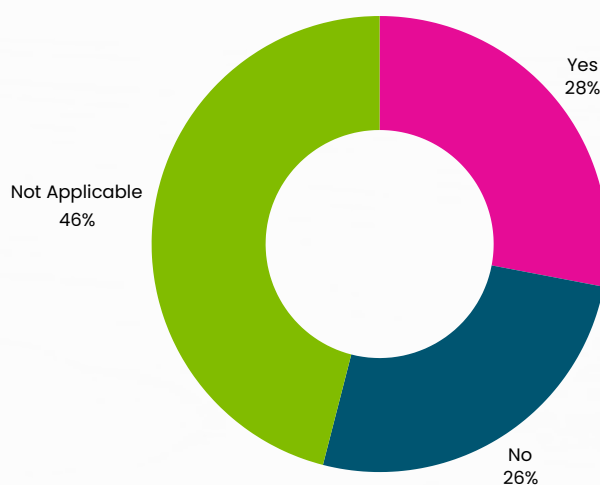


Figure 6. A pie chart to show the percentage of respondents that had changed, cut down or stopped support they pay for that helps their health and wellbeing.

Out of 305 responses, 14% stated they had stopped a special diet needed for a medical condition because of the cost. It was not applicable for 51%.

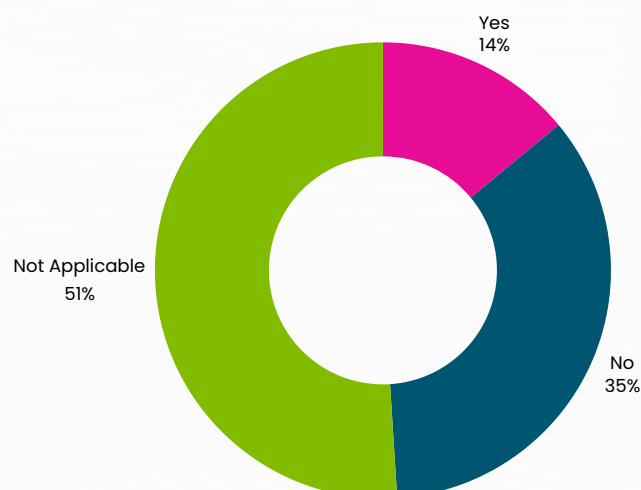


Figure 7. A pie chart to show the percentage of respondents that had stopped a special diet needed for a medical condition because of the cost.

Attending Medical Appointments

We asked respondents if, in the last six months, the cost of living had meant they had:

- Delayed asking for NHS help because they couldn't afford to take time off work.
- Didn't attend an NHS appointment because they couldn't afford to travel there.
- Didn't book an appointment because they couldn't afford the internet or the phone call.
- Didn't go to the dentist because of the cost of check-ups or treatment.

18% of respondents stated they had delayed asking for NHS help because they couldn't afford to take time off work.

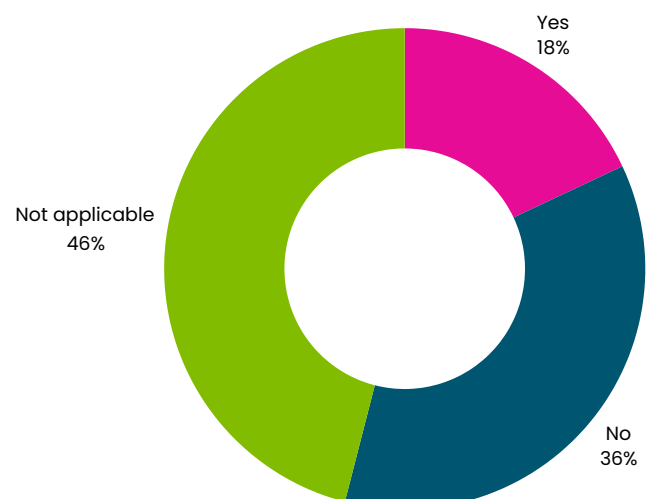
11% of respondents stated they had not attended an NHS appointment because they couldn't afford to travel there.

7% of respondents stated they had not booked an appointment because they couldn't afford the internet or the phone call.

35% of respondents had not gone to the dentist because of the cost of check-ups or treatment, with the vast majority experiencing problems with access or being able to afford it.

I have no confidence in the NHS at the moment. When I go for tests I am told I will get the results within 2-3 weeks, instead it is more like 6-12 months or longer.

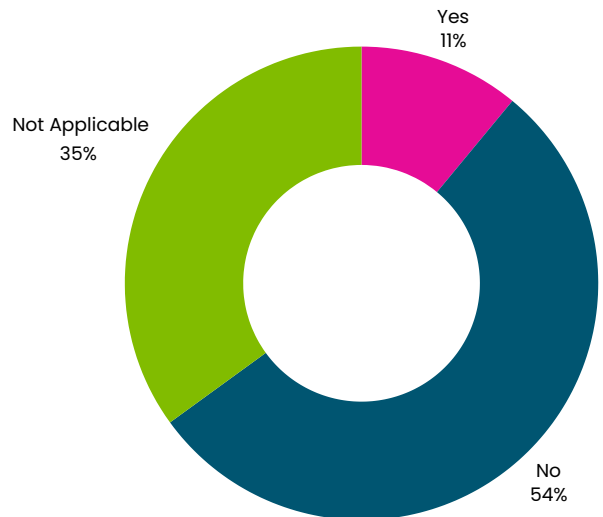
Figure 8. A pie chart to show the percentage of respondents that delayed asking for NHS help because they couldn't afford to take time off work. There were 317 responses.



316 people responded when asked if they had not attended an NHS appointment because they couldn't afford to travel there.

11% of respondents stated they had not attended an NHS appointment because they couldn't afford to travel there. It was not applicable for 35%. Of the 110 comments from respondents, 10 were about travel, with a mixture of positive and negative comments.

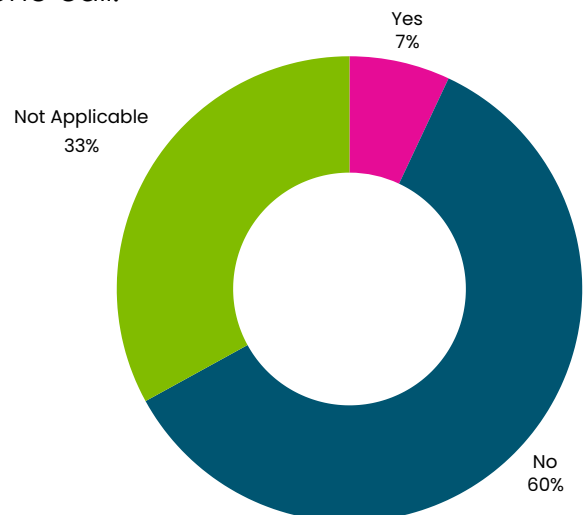
Figure 9. A pie chart to show the percentage of respondents that did not attend an NHS appointment because they couldn't afford to travel there.



316 people responded when asked if they had not booked an appointment because they couldn't afford the internet or the phone call.

Only 7% of respondents stated they had not booked an appointment because they couldn't afford the internet or the phone call.

Figure 10. A pie chart to show the percentage of respondents that did not book an appointment because they couldn't afford the internet or the phone call.



My son had to go to have stitches at the hospital and we had to walk there and back due to lack of transport or funds.

321 people responded when asked if they had not gone to the dentist because of the costs of check-ups or treatment.

35% of respondents had not gone to the dentist because of the cost of check-ups or treatment. It was not applicable for 24%.

Of the 110 comments from respondents, 56 were about accessing the dentist, with the vast majority experiencing problems with access or being able to afford it.

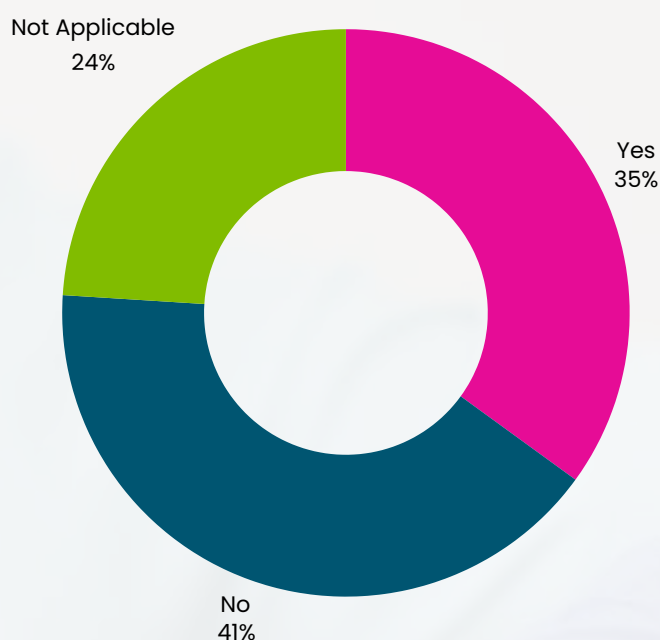


Figure 11. A pie chart to show the percentage of respondents that had not gone to the dentist because of the cost of check-ups or treatment.

“Can’t afford the treatment, I know I need a couple of fillings, but the cost of treatment is too expensive and can’t afford any extra bills.”

Paying for Medicines

We asked respondents if, in the last six months, the cost of living had meant they:

- Hadn't bought over-the-counter medication that they usually rely on.
- Hadn't picked up an NHS prescription because of the cost.
- Reduced the use of medical equipment at home because of the running costs (e.g. ventilators or dialysis).

20% of respondents stated that they had not bought over-the-counter medication that they usually rely on.

16% of respondents stated that they had not picked up an NHS prescription because of the cost.

4% of people stated they had reduced the use of medical equipment at home because of the running costs (e.g. ventilators, dialysis). Although this is a low figure, the level of impact on the individuals is particularly concerning.

321 people responded when asked if they had not bought over-the-counter medication that they usually rely on.

I sometimes have a bad chest but won't buy bronchial medicine anymore because of the cost.

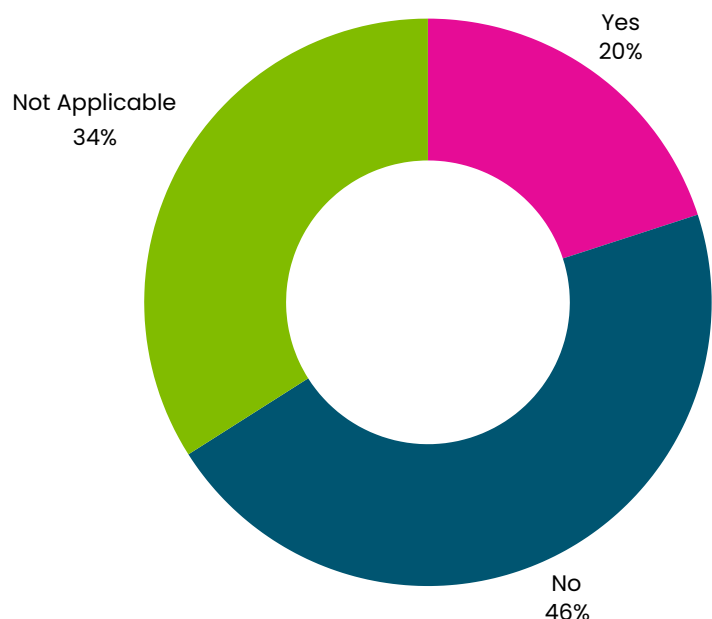


Figure 12. A pie chart to show the percentage of respondents that had not bought over-the-counter medication that they usually rely on.

16% of respondents stated that they had not picked up an NHS prescription because of the cost. It was not applicable for 38%.

312 people responded when asked if they had not picked up an NHS prescription because of the cost.

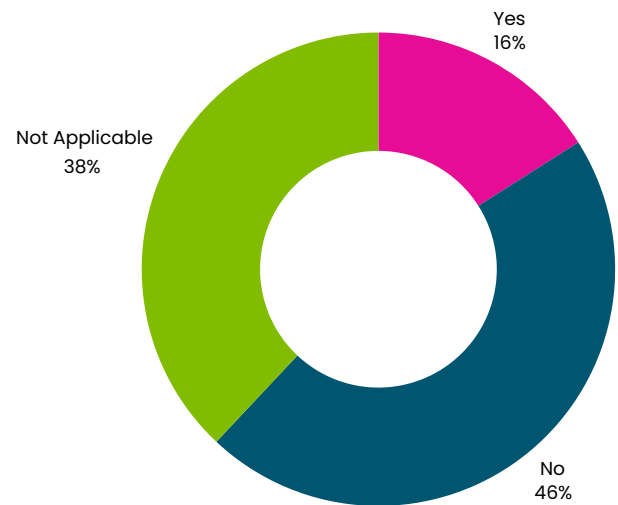


Figure 13. A pie chart to show the percentage of respondents that had not picked up an NHS prescription because of the cost.

4% of people stated they had reduced the use of medical equipment at home because of the running costs. It was not applicable for 58%.

311 people responded when asked if they had reduced the use of medical equipment at home because of the running costs (e.g. ventilators or dialysis).

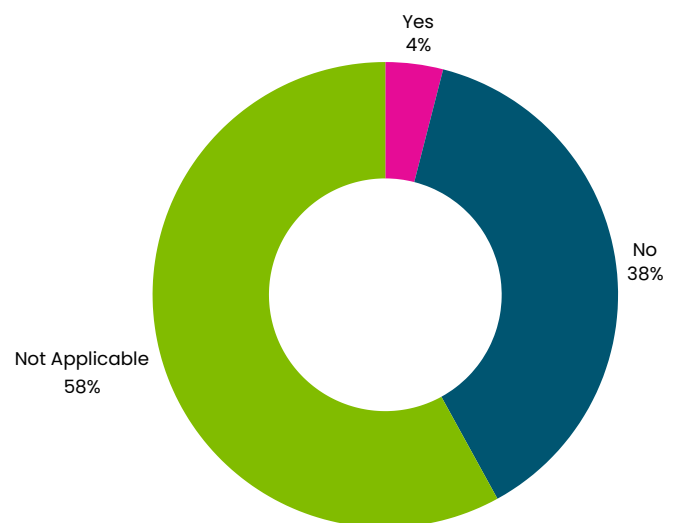


Figure 14. A pie chart to show the percentage of respondents that reduced the use of medical equipment at home because of the running costs.

Staying Warm

Of the 109 comments received about keeping warm, many of them talked about using a range of measures to reduce bills, such as reducing heating combined with wearing more clothes, and not using appliances as much.

86% of respondents confirmed that they had not turned on the heating when they usually would. Examples included:

- Only putting the heating on for a short time at the beginning and/or end of the day
- The challenge of having to top up pre-pay meters
- Poor insulation
- Fewer baths and showers
- Concerns re developing condensation and mould

45% of respondents had gone somewhere warm out of the house to avoid putting on the heating due to the rising cost of living, often going to visit family and friends, including one respondent who used the Warm Hub provision.

61% of respondents had gone to bed early to save energy costs.

79% of respondents stated they had turned off or avoided using appliances to save energy costs (e.g. not using the oven), including:

- Many people switching to air fryers rather than using the cooker
- Using a slow cooker or microwave instead of gas or electric cooker
- Using the washing machine and dryer less

Some respondents described having young children, older family members, or people in the household with medical conditions where reducing the heating was less possible.

Feedback highlighted the potential feelings of shame and embarrassment from not being able to afford heating due to the rising cost of living.

We put the heating on when it's absolutely necessary. I worry about the house and condensation leading to mould because we can't keep the house at a constant warm.

88% of respondents confirmed that they had put on more clothes than usual to stay warm and also described wearing clothes for longer to reduce washing, due to the rising cost of living.

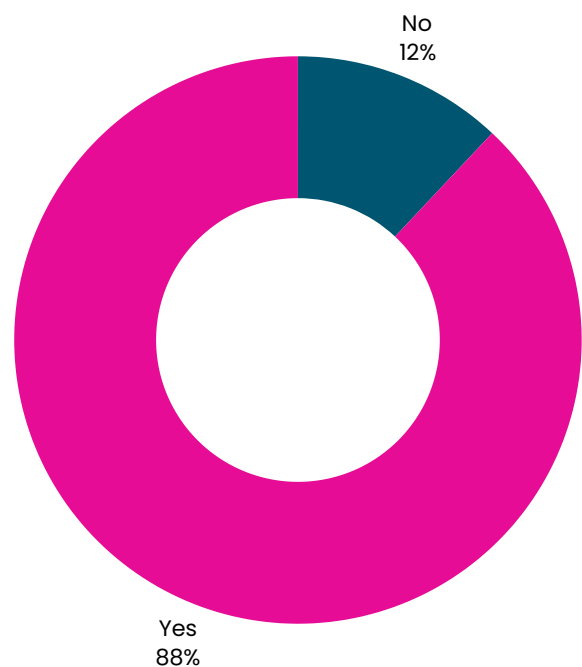
We asked if respondents had made any changes to keep warm due to the rising cost of living, such as:

- Put on more clothes than usual to stay warm
- Not turned on the heating when they usually would
- Gone somewhere warm out of the house to avoid putting on the heating
- Gone to bed early to save energy costs
- Turned off or avoided using appliances to save energy costs (e.g. not using the oven).

88% of respondents confirmed that they had put on more clothes than usual to stay warm due to the rising cost of living.

304 people responded when asked if they had put on more clothes than usual to stay warm.

Figure 15. A pie chart to show the percentage of respondents that had put on more clothes than usual to stay warm due to the rising cost of living. There were 304 responses.



“I have lived in thermals, three jumpers, a hat and scarf and gloves for the past 3 months. My heating has been on for 3 hours a day only as I can’t afford any more than that.”

Of the 109 comments received about keeping warm, many of them mentioned not turning on the heating when they usually would.

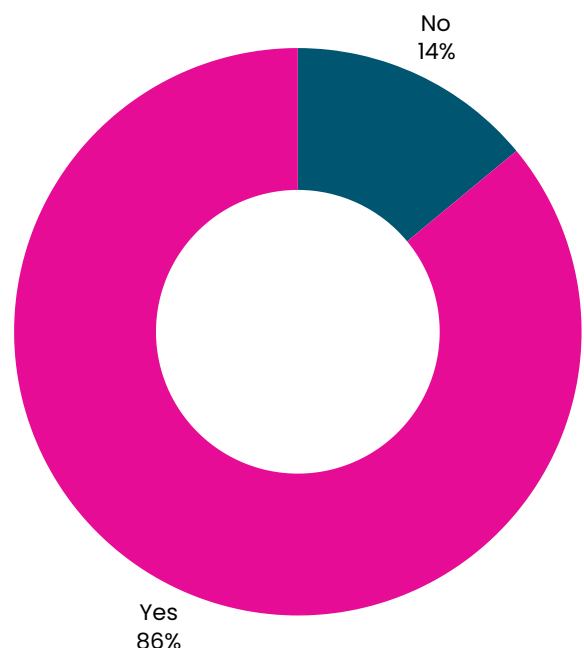
86% of respondents confirmed that they had not turned on the heating when they usually would due to the rising cost of living.

The 29 comments that specifically gave more insight about not turning on the heating talked about:

- Only putting the heating on for a short time at the beginning and/or end of the day
- The challenge of having to top up pre-pay meters
- Poor insulation
- Fewer baths and showers
- Concerns re developing condensation and mould

311 people responded when asked if they had not turned on the heating when they usually would.

Figure 16. A pie chart to show the percentage of respondents that had not turned on the heating when they usually would due to the rising cost of living.



“My house is badly insulated and the bill can get very high very quickly so I can only afford 30 minutes of heating in the morning and 30 in the evening. I cook large portions to avoid using the oven. ”

Some of the 109 comments mentioned using warm places/warm hubs outside of the house.

45% of respondents had gone somewhere warm out of the house to avoid putting on the heating due to the rising cost of living.

308 people responded when asked if they had gone somewhere warm out of the house to avoid putting on the heating.

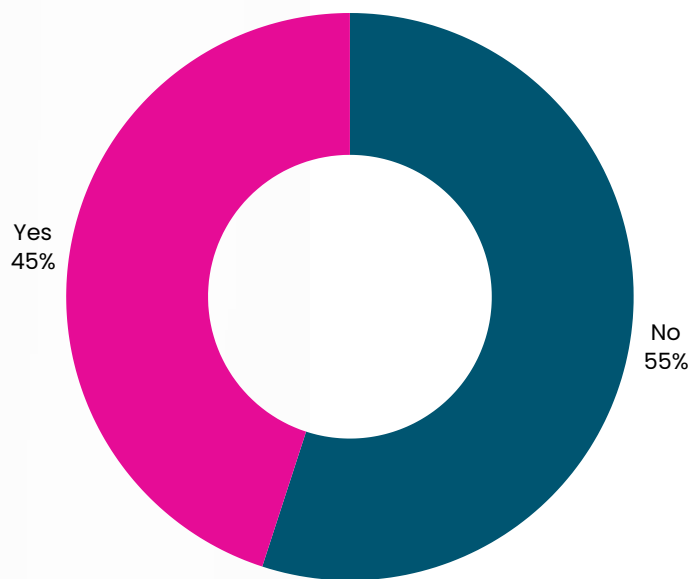


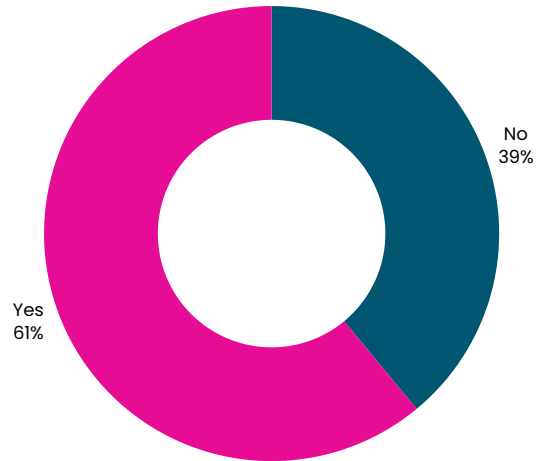
Figure 17. A pie chart to show the percentage of respondents that had gone somewhere warm out of the house to avoid putting on the heating due to the rising cost of living.

“My Daughter took over paying my heating bills and I feel ashamed I can’t manage my bills.”

“Stayed longer at friends and relatives than I usually would have done to avoid putting the heating on.”

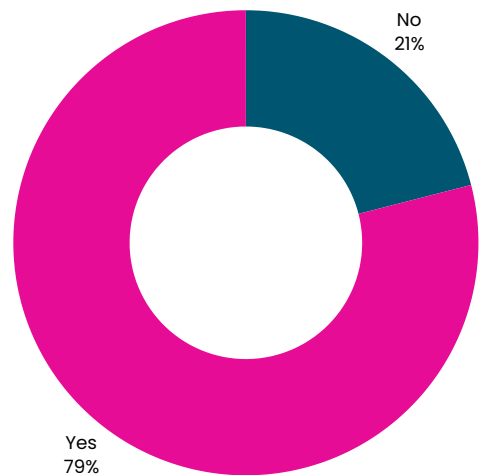
Out of 308 responses, 61% of respondents had gone to bed early to save on energy costs due to the rising cost of living.

Figure 18. A pie chart to show the percentage of respondents that had gone to bed early to save on energy costs.



Out of 308 responses, 79% of respondents stated they had turned off or avoided using appliances to save energy costs (e.g. not using the oven) due to the rising cost of living.

Figure 19. A pie chart to show the percentage of respondents that had turned off or avoided using appliances to save energy costs.



Food

We asked if respondents had made any changes to buying food due to the rising cost of living, such as:

- Reducing how much food they eat and buy.
- Changing the type of food they bought (perhaps less healthy options, or different brands).
- Using a foodbank, food pantry, etc.

68% of respondents stated that they had reduced how much food they eat and buy due to the rising cost of living, including those with a condition needing a special diet such as gluten-free.

Some comments also mentioned the need to ensure their children ate before they did and so they may go without.

77% of respondents stated that they had changed the type of food they bought due to the rising cost of living. Of the 98 comments received about food, 66 talked about this specifically.

Themes included:

- Using budget supermarkets
- Actively finding cheaper brands or special offers
- Buying less healthy versions of foods
- Meal planning and bulk preparation
- No longer having any treats

“Buying way less, cooking in bulk and planning to avoid waste. I’m gluten and lacto free so food is extremely expensive and I can’t purchase cheap food as most contains gluten which makes me ill. Food money does not go far enough but I always just about manage for my son and I.”

We’ve reduced food products, swapped to cheaper brands and occasionally have used a food bank, although we try not to as we know there are others in need more than ourselves.

Out of 304 responses, 77% stated that they had changed the type of food they bought due to the rising cost of living.

Of the 98 comments received about food, 66 talked about this specifically.

Themes included:

- Using budget supermarkets
- Actively finding cheaper brands or special offers
- Buying less healthy versions of foods
- Meal planning and bulk preparation
- No longer having any treats

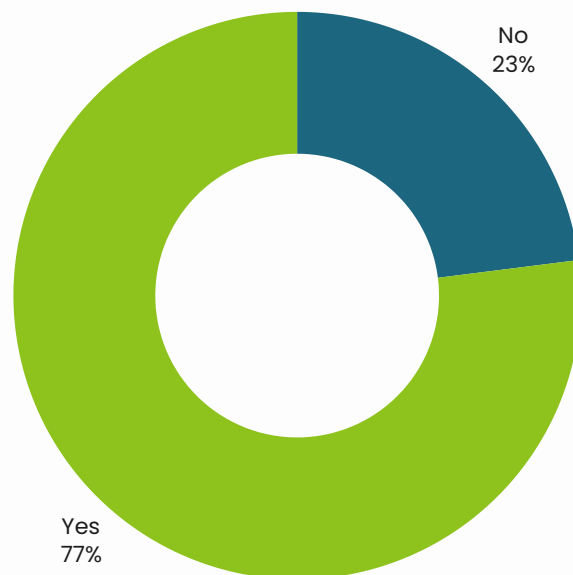


Figure 20. A pie chart to show the percentage of respondents that had changed the type of food they bought.

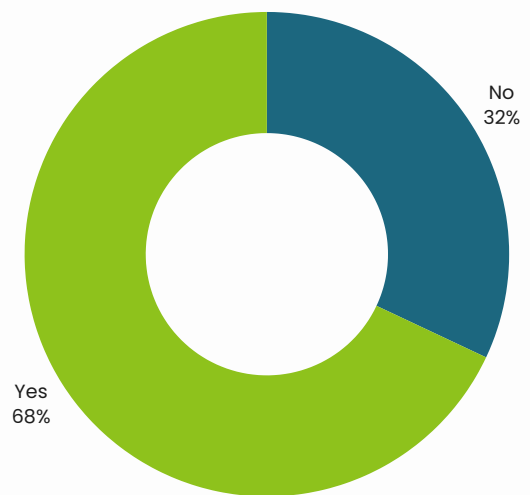
“Changed to lots of home brands. Beans/tinned products and cereal mainly. Going to pound shops for toiletries and cleaning products.”

Of the 98 comments received about food, 9 mentioned eating or buying less and raised the impact of having a condition needing a special diet such as gluten-free.

Some comments also mentioned the need to ensure their children ate before they did and so they may go without.

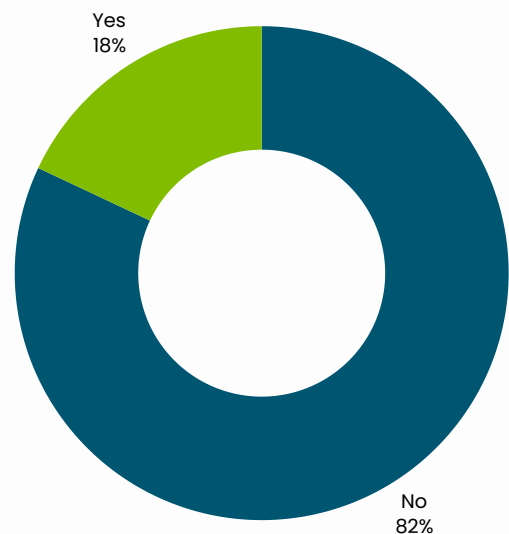
Out of 308 responses, 68% stated that they had reduced how much food they eat and buy due to the rising cost of living.

Figure 21. A pie chart to show the percentage of respondents that had reduced how much food they eat and buy.



Out of 304 responses, 18% stated that they had used a foodbank, food pantry, etc. due to the rising cost of living.

Figure 22. A pie chart to show the percentage of respondents that had used a foodbank or food pantry.



Impact on the Family

We asked respondents what impacts there had been on their family due to the rising cost of living.

Examples include:

- Skipping meals so their children can eat.
- Not being able to afford to buy school uniform or shoes.
- Stopping their children attending activities/school trips because of the cost.

Out of 299 responses, 17% stated they had skipped meals so their children can eat.

Out of 297 responses, 14% stated they had not been able to afford to buy school uniform or shoes.

Out of 299 responses, 16% stated they had stopped their children attending activities/school trips because of the cost.

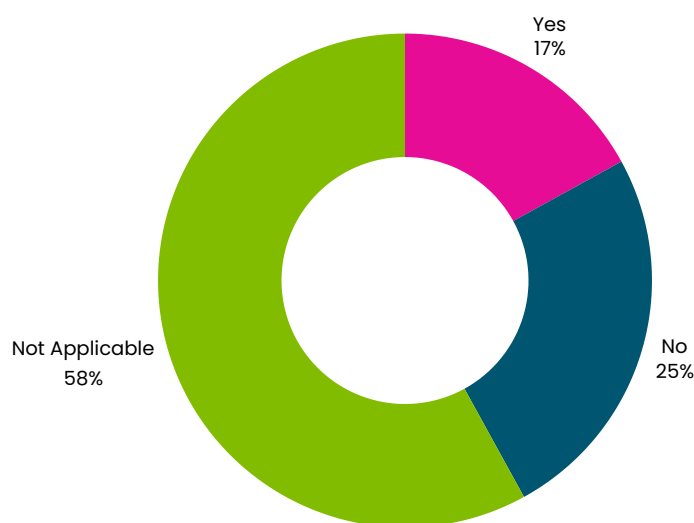


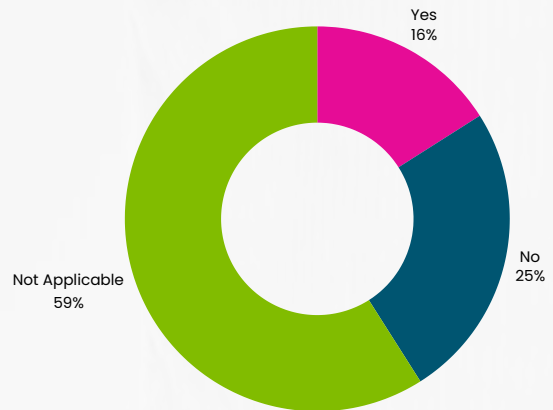
Figure 23. A pie chart to show the percentage of respondents that had skipped meals so their children could eat.

“My children come first, I always feed them first, if there are any left overs then I eat that.”

I can't reduce the heating bill as I have a small child and also live with my grandmother, who can't cope if the temperature drops below 21 degrees!

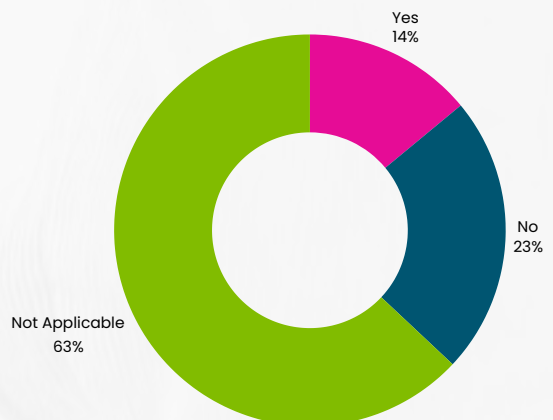
Of the 44 comments received on family impact, 14 mentioned having to reduce clubs, sports and extracurricular lessons such as music, because of the costs, including transport costs.

Figure 24. A pie chart to show the percentage of respondents that had stopped their children attending activities/school trips because of the cost.



16% of respondents stated they had stopped their children attending activities/school trips because of the cost, due to the rising cost of living.

Figure 25. A pie chart to show the percentage of respondents that had not been able to afford to buy school uniform or shoes.



14% of respondents stated they had not been able to afford to buy school uniform or shoes, due to the rising cost of living.

“Grandparents have had to help with cost of school shoes and winter coats. I now buy second hand school uniform.”

Household Bills

45% of respondents had had unexpected costs they couldn't find the money for, describing:

- Boiler repairs
- Car repairs
- A new stairlift
- Broken appliances
- Dental treatment
- Broken furniture
- Household repairs such as gutters

Only 3% of respondents had not been able to get to work because of the cost of fuel or public transport.

43% of respondents had cancelled or moved to a cheaper broadband or mobile contract due to the rising cost of living.

7% of respondents had needed to find cheaper accommodation because they couldn't afford the rent or mortgage.

59% of respondents had reduced how often they shower/bathe or wash clothes to save money.

30% of respondents had gone into debt for the first time or gone further into debt due to the rising cost of living, stating that credits cards were being used to pay for both everyday costs and unforeseen bills.

8% of respondents had stopped providing care for someone because they couldn't afford to, and 5% of respondents had stopped childcare they paid for because of the cost.

"I have a 16 month old baby, I was made redundant in October and cannot afford childcare. I have to have the heating on because babies need to be warm. My gas and electric bills are extortionate - £258 is ridiculous when you are not earning a wage."

I hold off using the washer as much as I can. I shower less often now; I shower about every third day when I used to shower every day.

We asked respondents about challenges with their household bills due to the rising cost of living, such as:

- Not being able to get to work because of the cost of fuel or public transport.
- Cancelling or moving to a cheaper broadband or mobile contract.
- Needing to find cheaper accommodation because they can't afford the rent or mortgage.
- Reducing how often they shower/bathe or wash clothes to save money.
- Going into debt for the first time or going further into debt.
- Stopping providing care for someone because they couldn't afford to.
- Stopping childcare they paid for because of the cost.
- Having unexpected costs they couldn't find the money for (e.g. fridge, washer, or boiler breaking down, house repairs, furniture, etc).

Out of 302 responses, only 3% had not able to get to work because of the cost of fuel or public transport due to the rising cost of living. 57% stated this was not applicable to them.

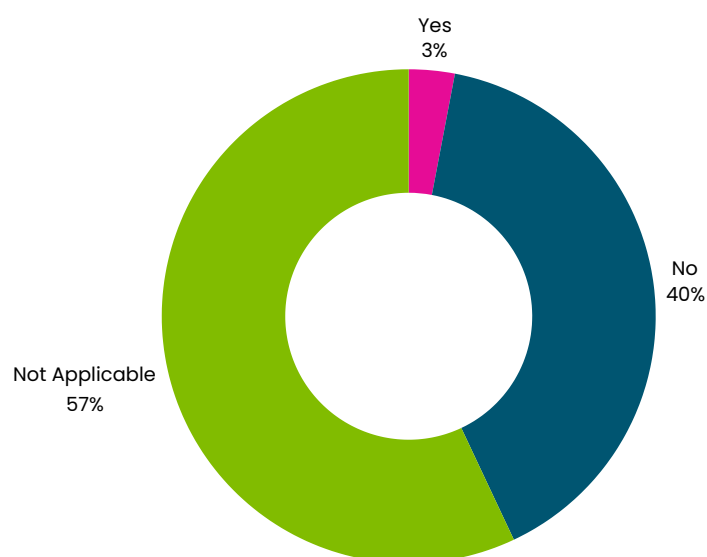
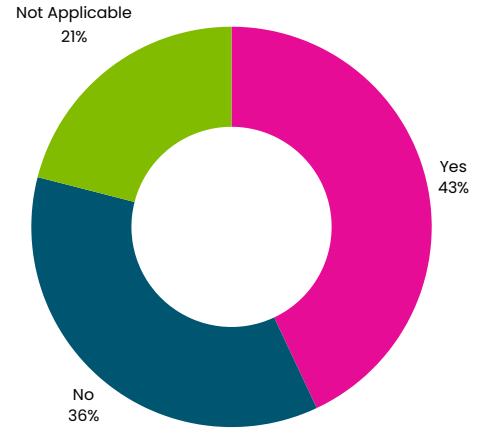


Figure 26. A pie chart to show the percentage of respondents that had not been able to get to work because of the cost of fuel or public transport.

Household Bills

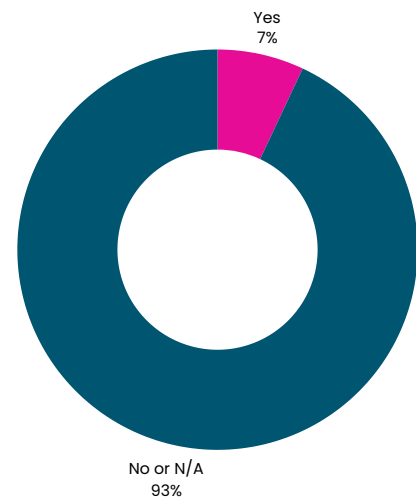
Out of 301 responses, 43% had cancelled or moved to a cheaper broadband or mobile contract due to the rising cost of living. 21% stated this was not applicable to them.

Figure 27. A pie chart to show the percentage of respondents that had cancelled or moved to a cheaper broadband or mobile contract



Out of 299 responses, 7% had needed to find cheaper accommodation because they can't afford the rent or mortgage due to the rising cost of living.

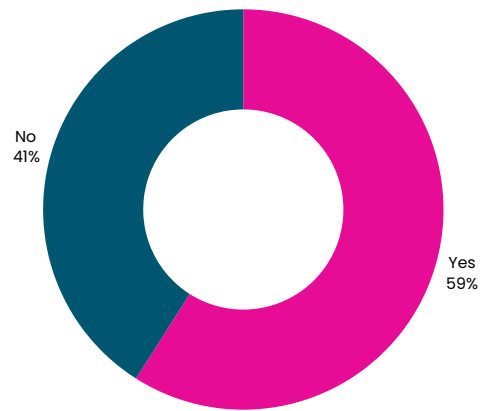
Figure 28. A pie chart to show the percentage of respondents that needed to find cheaper accommodation because they couldn't afford the rent or mortgage



“Private renting is getting too expensive; my rent recently went up £50 a month to £700. I'm a single parent with a 16 year old, working full time as a teaching assistant (I earn £1,532). ”

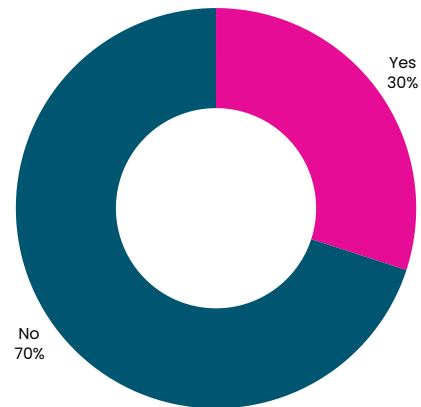
Out of 301 responses, 59% stated they had reduced how often they shower/bathe or wash clothes to save money due to the rising cost of living.

Figure 29. A pie chart to show the percentage of respondents that had reduced how often they shower/bathe or wash clothes to save money.



Out of 300 responses, 30% had gone into debt for the first time or gone further into debt due to the rising cost of living.

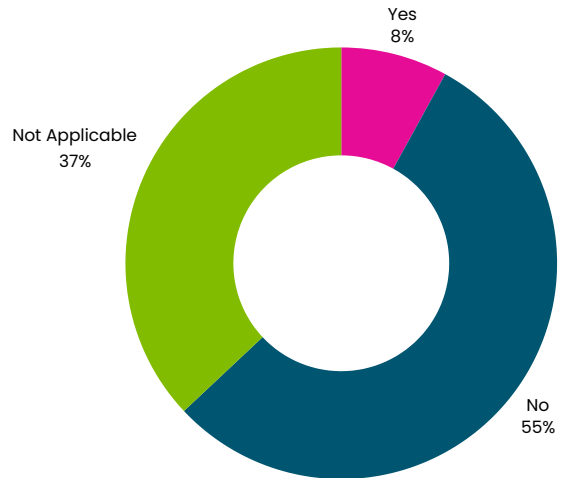
Figure 30. A pie chart to show the percentage of respondents that had gone into debt for the first time or gone further into debt.



“Had to pay for car repairs on my credit card as I need my car for work. Had to borrow money for petrol so I can go to work.”

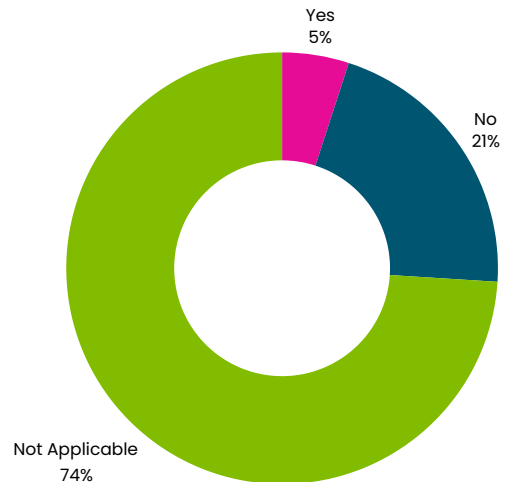
Out of 299 responses, 8% stated they had stopped providing care for someone because they couldn't afford to continue due to the rising cost of living.

Figure 31. A pie chart to show the percentage of respondents that had stopped providing care for someone because they couldn't afford to continue.



Out of 301 responses, 5% had stopped childcare they paid for because of the cost due to the rising cost of living. 74% stated this was not applicable to them.

Figure 32. A pie chart to show the percentage of respondents that had stopped childcare they paid for because of the cost.



“I can't afford childcare full stop, so my mum looks after my baby 2 days a week at least for free. ”

Of the 71 comments received regarding household bills, 30 comments related to unexpected costs, for example:

- Boiler repairs
- Car repairs
- A new stairlift
- Broken appliances
- Dental treatment
- Broken furniture
- Household repairs such as gutters

Out of 298 responses, 43% had had unexpected costs they couldn't find the money for due to the rising cost of living.



Figure 33. A pie chart to show the percentage of respondents that had unexpected costs they couldn't find the money for.

“Slept on the floor as bed broke and couldn't afford to buy a new one, friends have since found me one from someone giving one away. I have changed my phone contract to save money and I only put a wash on at most twice a week, mainly one wash of school uniforms and essential clothes for the week. We have a bath once a week and body washes at the sink other days.”

Impact on Free Time

We asked respondents about changes to how they use their free time due to the rising cost of living, such as:

- **Not travelling to see friends or family because of the cost.**
- **Cutting down or stopping spending money on social events or entertainment (including community groups).**
- **Cutting down or stopping things that help them stay fit and healthy (e.g. cancelled gym membership).**
- **Stopping volunteering or donating to charity.**

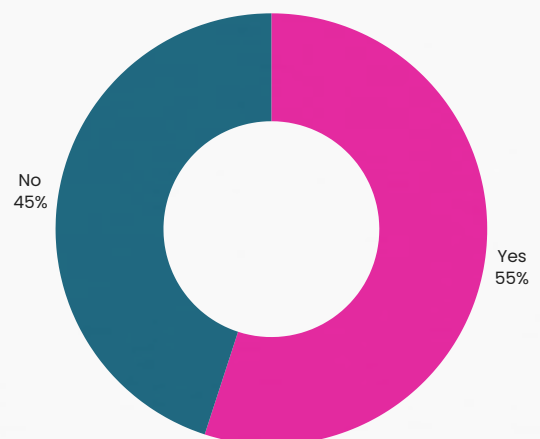
Out of 299 responses, 55% stated they had not travelled to see friends or family because of the cost.

Out of 298 responses, 72% stated they had cut down or stopped spending money on social events or entertainment due to the rising cost of living. A number of them also commented on just staying in bed to keep warm.

Out of 294 responses, 42% stated they had cut down or stopped things that help them stay fit and healthy, such as attending the gym or doing other exercise.

Out of 296 responses, 37% of respondents stated they had stopped volunteering or donating to charity.

Figure 34. A pie chart to show the percentage of respondents that had not travelled to see friends or family because of the cost.

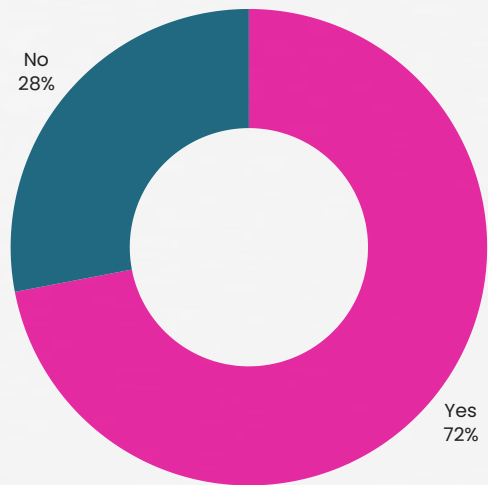


I just stay at home in a cold house, never socialise. Lie in bed to keep warm.

Of the 81 comments about impact on free time, there were 32 where money was the significant issue, and although for some the reason was deteriorating health, most comments reported socialising less.

72% of respondents stated they had cut down or stopped spending money on social events (including community groups) or entertainment due to the rising cost of living.

Figure 35. A pie chart to show the percentage of respondents that had cut down or stopped spending money on social events or entertainment.



Of the 81 comments about impact on free time, many of them talked about seeing less of family and friends and socialising less. 21 comments mentioned no longer donating to charity.

42% of respondents stated they had stopped volunteering or donating to charity due to the rising cost of living.

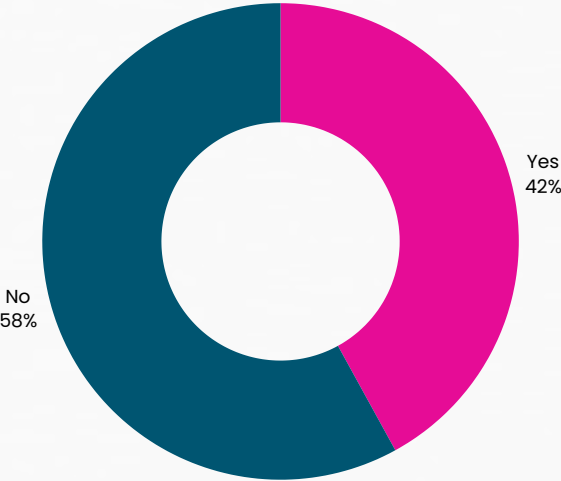
Figure 36. A pie chart to show the percentage of respondents that had stopped volunteering or donating to charity.



Of the 81 comments about impact on free time, 12 reported no longer attending the gym or doing other exercise due to the rising cost of living.

42% of respondents stated they had cut down or stopped things that help them stay fit and healthy due to the rising cost of living.

Figure 37. A pie chart to show the percentage of respondents that had cut down or stopped things that help them stay fit and healthy.



“When I was fit I used to go swimming and go walking. It was Covid that put a stop to that. My mobility was badly affected and I could not get back to what I used to do as my mobility was cut down. Definitely stopped going to Keep Fit.”



Conclusions

People responding to our survey spoke of significant impacts of the rising cost of living.


Over half of respondents cited issues such as deterioration in long-term conditions, new physical health conditions, and getting the right help, such as difficulties seeing a GP.

60% of respondents stated that their mental health had got worse over the previous six months. This took the form of experiencing mental health issues for the first time, feeling stressed, anxious, having low moods, trouble sleeping or irritability.

Existing mental health issues deteriorated as there were difficulties in accessing the right help, such as GPs, hospitals, and housing support.

A few respondents had delayed asking for NHS help due to cost, not attended NHS appointments because they couldn't afford to travel there, or had not booked an appointment because they couldn't afford the internet or the phone call.

35% of respondents had not gone to the dentist because of the cost of check-ups or treatment. Some respondents stated that they had not bought over-the-counter medication that they usually rely on or had not picked up an NHS prescription because of the cost, and a small number had reduced the use of medical equipment at home because of the running costs (e.g. ventilators or dialysis).



A very small number of respondents stated they had changed, cut down or stopped support from paid carers, whilst a larger proportion stated they had changed, cut down or stopped support from services that they pay privately for, such as toenail cutting, physiotherapy, chiropractic therapy and sports massage, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), psychology and counselling, speech and occupational therapy for children, and opticians.


Some reported having to reduce or stop going to the gym or doing other exercise due to the costs (including travel costs), and 14% of respondents stated they had changed, cut down or stopped a special diet needed for a medical condition because of the cost.

Over 80% of respondents confirmed that they had put on more clothes than usual to stay warm, had not turned on the heating when they usually would, or had gone somewhere warm out of the house to avoid putting on the heating. Lots of respondents had gone to bed early to save energy costs and had turned off or avoided using appliances to save energy costs, with many people switching to using air fryers or the microwave rather than the cooker.

Over 60% of respondents stated that they had reduced or changed how much food they eat and increased their use of budget supermarkets. 18% of respondents stated that they had used a foodbank, food pantry, etc. Some stated they had skipped meals so their children could eat.

14% of respondents stated they had not been able to afford to buy school uniform or shoes. 16% of respondents stated they had stopped their children attending activities/school trips because of the cost.

43% of respondents had cancelled or moved to a cheaper broadband or mobile contract, 7% of respondents had needed to find cheaper accommodation because they couldn't afford the rent or mortgage, and 30% of respondents had gone into debt for the first time or gone further into debt.



45% of respondents had had unexpected costs they couldn't find the money for, such as boiler and car repairs, household repairs and replacing broken furniture.

Over half of respondents stated they had not travelled to see friends or family because of the cost. Almost three quarters stated they had cut down or stopped spending money on social events or entertainment. Over a third stated they had stopped volunteering or donating to charity due to the rising cost of living.



Demographics



Gender

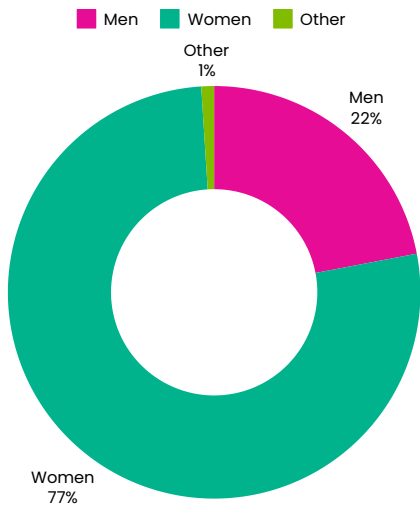
292 respondents gave information on their gender:

Female 226

Male 63

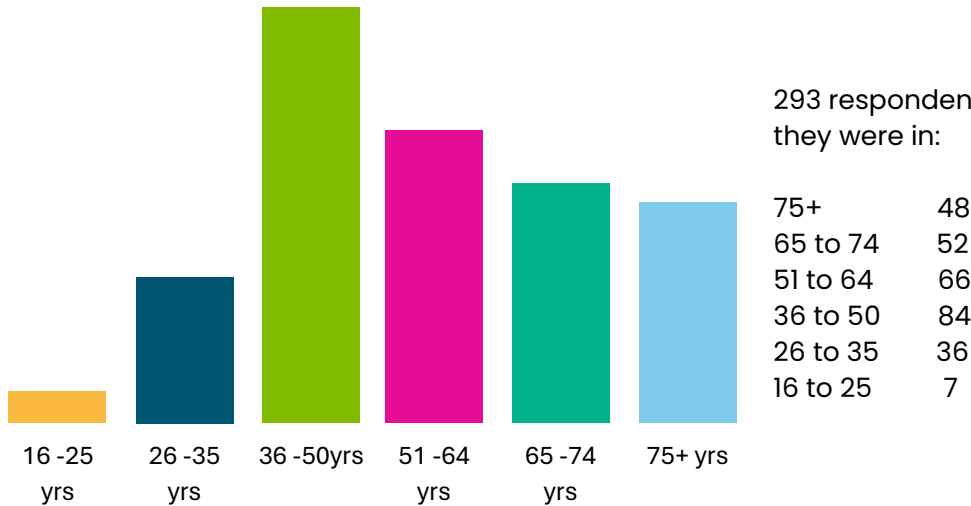
Other 3

Male respondents were underrepresented when compared with local demographics; 49% of Tameside's residents are male, 51% are female. The reasons for this should be considered to inform future work in this area.



Age

293 respondents identified the age range they were in:



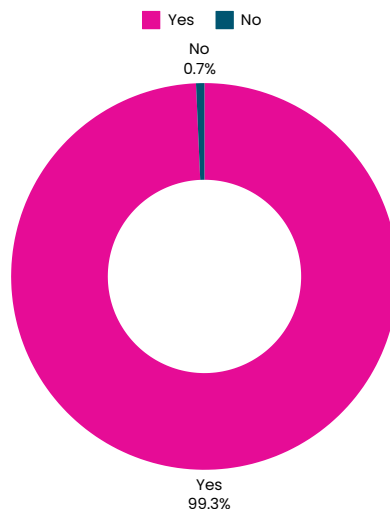
Overall there was good representation from all age groups except the 16 to 25 group, with the highest number of responses from the 36 to 50 age group.

Gender Assigned at Birth

266 respondents identified whether their gender was the same as the sex they were assigned at birth:

Yes 264 (99%)

No 2 (1%)

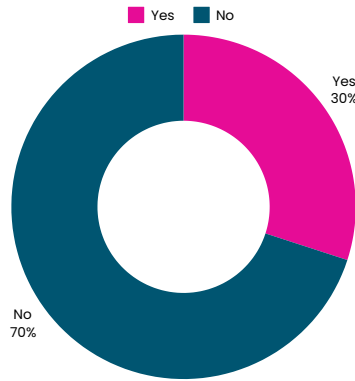


Demographics

Disability

285 respondents identified whether they described themselves as disabled:

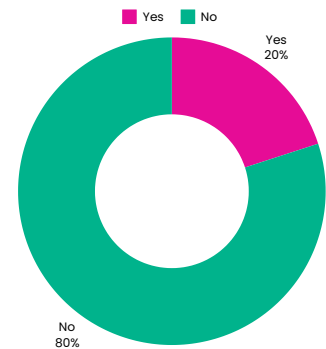
Yes 86
No 199



Carers

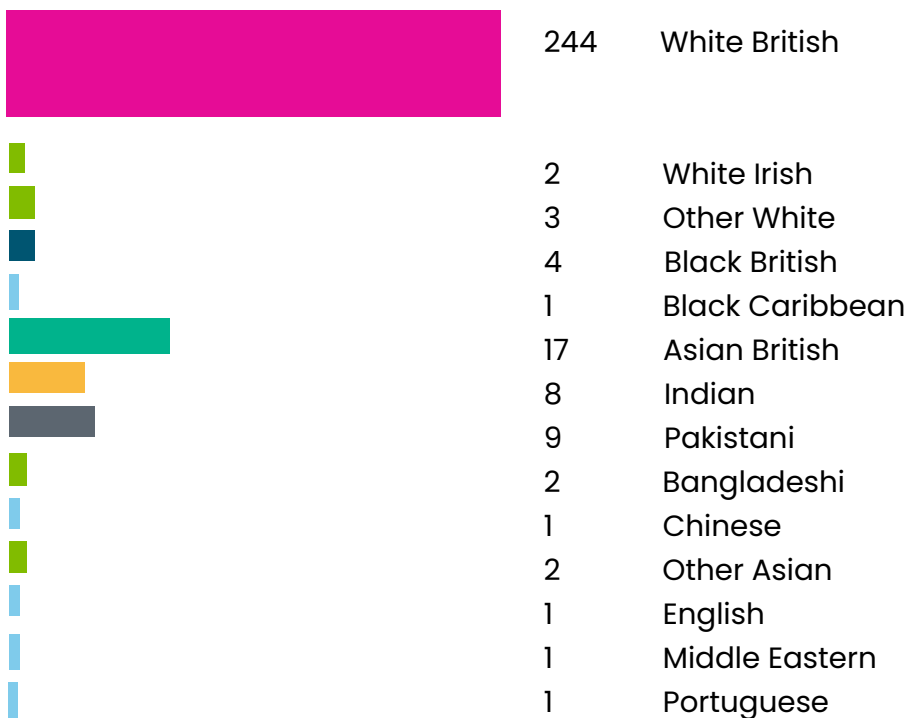
290 respondents identified whether they described themselves as an unpaid carer:

Yes 58
No 232



Ethnicity

Tameside is predominantly White, which makes up 90.9% of the population. 6.65% of the population are Asian; 1.4% are Mixed; 0.08% Black; and 0.2% of the population are other ethnicities. There was underrepresentation of ethnicities other than White British.



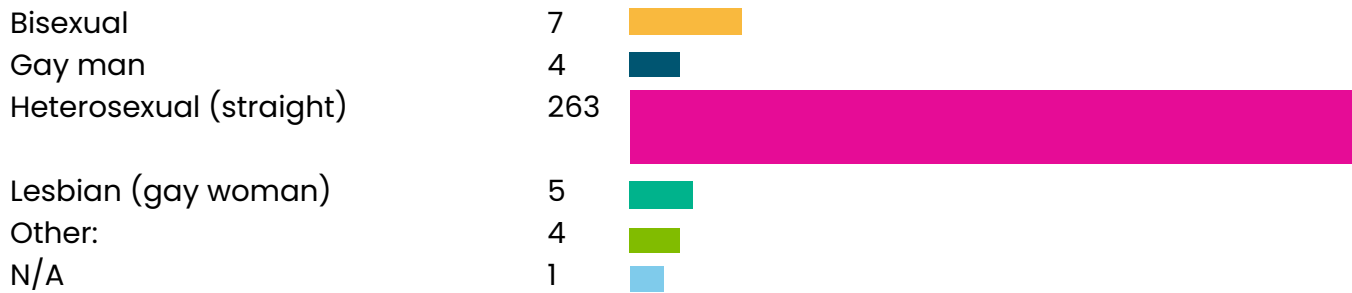
Demographics



Sexuality

Responses on sexual orientation align with local demographics: 90.8% of Tameside residents identify as straight or heterosexual; 1.8% identify as gay or lesbian; all other sexual orientations make up 1.4% of the population (5.9% declined to answer).

281 respondents identified their sexual orientation:



Religion, Faith or Belief

153 respondents identified their religion, faith or belief:

1	Agnostic	2	Mormon
4	Atheist	18	Muslim
35	Christian	5	Other
49	Church of England	3	Roman Catholic
8	Hindu	24	Sikh
5	Methodist		

Demographics



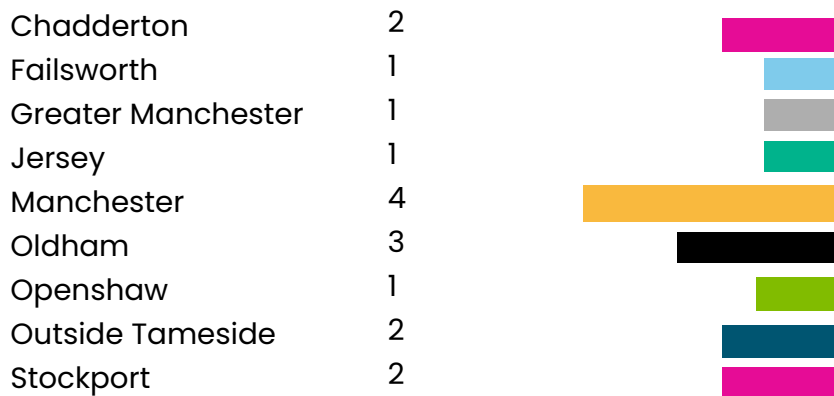
Respondents Location – Tameside

295 respondents stated which town they lived in:



Respondents Location – Other

17 respondents identified where they lived outside Tameside:



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