



Department
of Health &
Social Care

Impacts of winter pressures and the cost-of-living crisis on adults in the UK

Summaries of ONS publication '[Tracking the impact of winter pressures in Great Britain: November 2022 to February 2023](#)' and Resolution Foundation report '[Hoping and Coping: How families were faring in March 2023](#)'

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Overview of slide pack

This slide pack contains summaries of two publications that provide insights into the **impacts of winter pressures** and the **cost-of-living crisis** for UK households:

- ONS – [Tracking the impact of winter pressures in Great Britain: November 2022 to February 2022](#) (released 24th April)
- Resolution Foundation – [Hoping and coping: How families were faring in March 2023](#) (released 27th April)

Both publications highlight that issues such as **energy** and **food insecurity** are affecting the lives of adults in the UK, with some groups being more affected.

The ONS publication found that people **experiencing moderate-to-severe depressive symptoms**, people **economically inactive** for reasons other than being retired, and **disabled** people were most commonly likely to encounter these issues.

The Resolution Foundation report found that while **middle-aged** adults were most likely to cut back on food and energy, **bottom-quintile income earners** and **younger** adults were more likely to report issues such as skipping meals and missing priority bill payments. The report also found associations between the cost-of-living crisis and **worsening mental health**.

Resolution Foundation findings around older adults being more financially resilient to the cost-of-living crisis, and the negative impacts it is having on mental health are **consistent with previous ONS publications** this winter.





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Tracking the impact of winter pressures in Great Britain

Summary of the ONS publication '[Tracking the impact of winter pressures in Great Britain: November 2022 to February 2023](#)'

Publication overview

The Office for National Statistics has published the fourth edition of their Winter Pressures analysis '[Tracking the impact of winter pressures in Great Britain: November 2022 to February 2023](#)' on 24th April.

- This publication contains survey findings on **food insecurity**, **energy insecurity**, and **accessing healthcare**, and how these issues affect the lives of respondents.
- For the first time, this analysis **summarises the changes in experiences** among a variety of groups of the population that previous analyses have shown are disproportionately impacted by pressures during winter, including groups such as adults with depressive symptoms, disabled adults and adults aged 16 to 29 years.
- Most metrics reported here are **broadly similar to the previous period**; around the same proportion of adults reported they run out of food (5%), were unable to keep comfortably warm in their homes (20%), or were waiting for NHS treatment (21%).
- These slides will draw out the key findings from the publication, using the datasets provided to provide further breakdowns.

Link to the data:

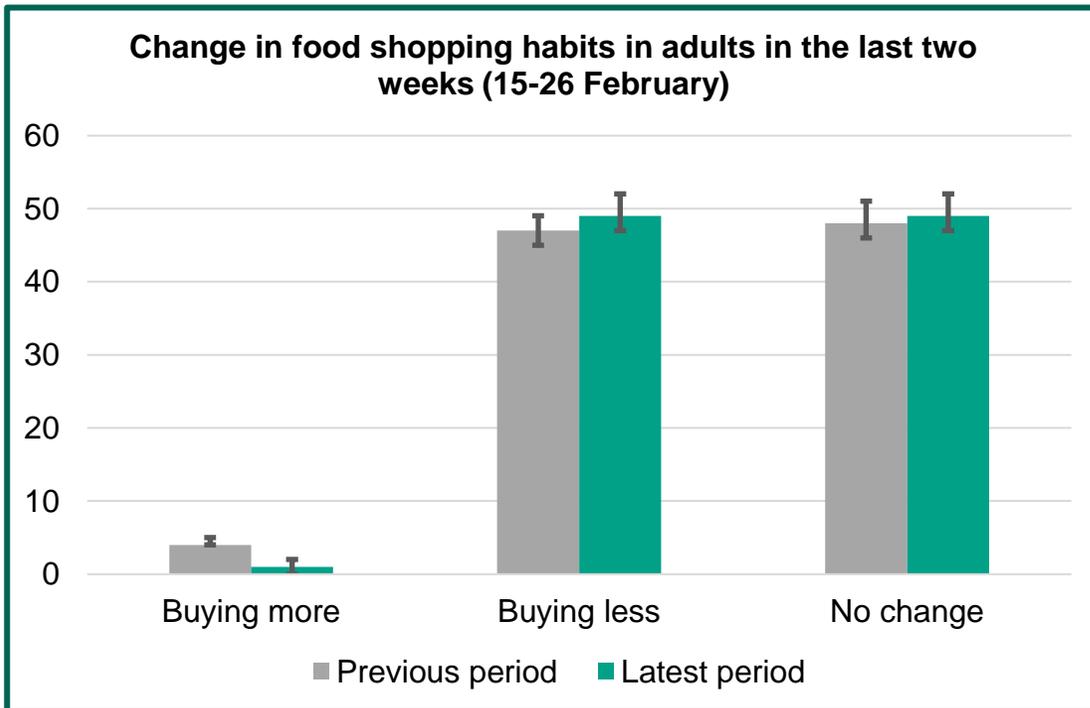
[Tracking the impact of winter pressures in Great Britain: longitudinal analysis](#) (Dataset, released 24 February 2023. Main indicators of the impact of winter pressures from the Winter Survey. Tracking the responses of the same participants to the Winter Survey over time.)



Food Insecurity

In the latest period (15 to 26 February 2023), **49%** of adults reported that they have been **buying less food** in the last two weeks, whilst 1% reported buying more and 49% reported no change in their food shopping habits.

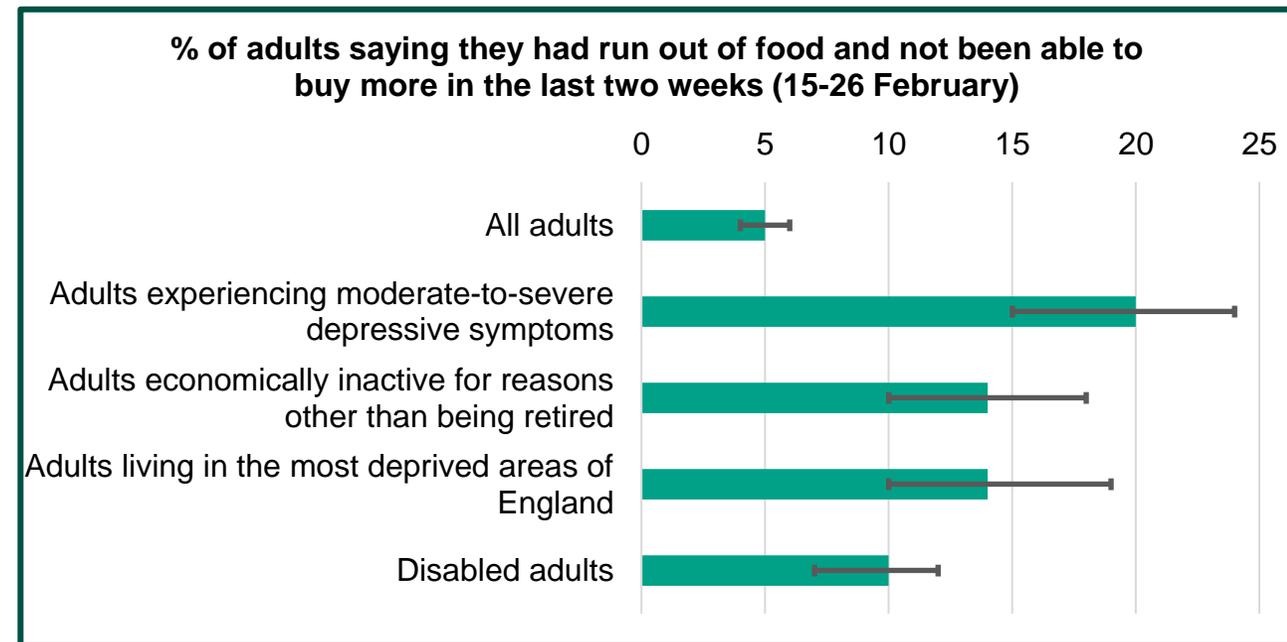
This compares to 47% who reported buying less, 4% who reported buying more, and 48% who reported no change in the previous period (22 November 2022 to 8 January 2023).



In the latest period, **5%** of adults said they had **run out of food** and had **not been able to buy more** in the last two weeks. This compares to 4% of adults in the previous period.

3% of adults **persistently reported** this in both the latest and previous period, whilst 2% reported this in only the latest period, and 1% reported this only in the previous period.

Some groups are more likely to report running out of food and being unable to afford more, as shown below.

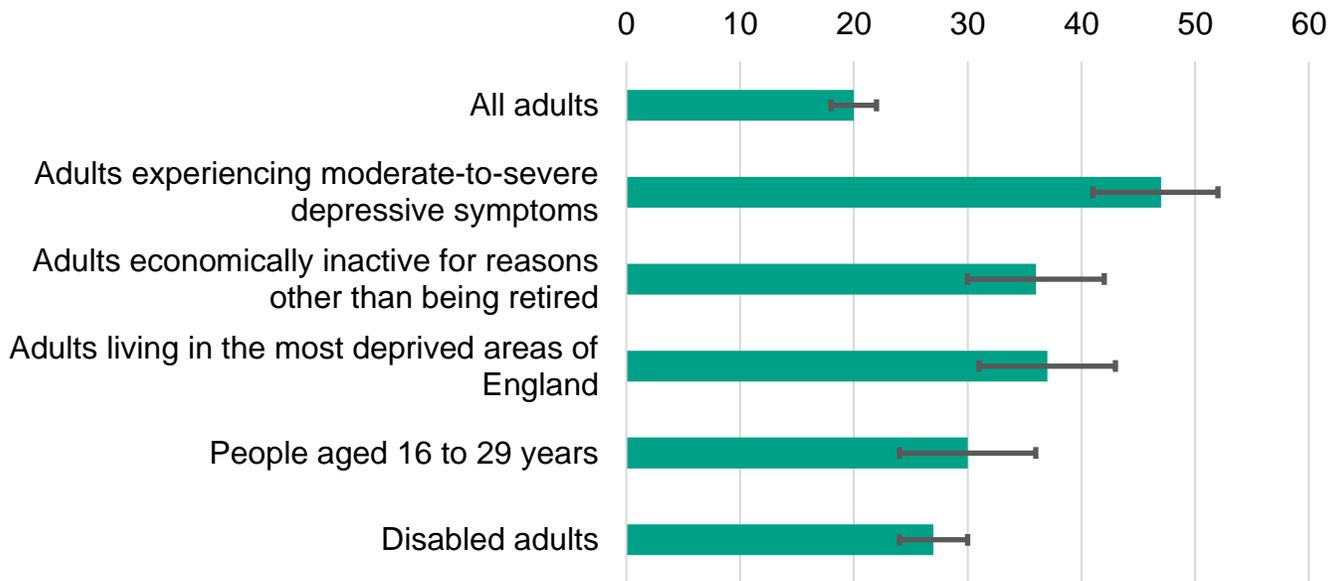


Energy Insecurity

In the latest period, **20%** of adults reported that they were **occasionally, hardly ever, or never able to keep comfortably warm** in their home in the past two weeks. **13%** of adults **persistently reported** this, whilst 7% only reported this in the latest period and 9% only reported this in the previous period.

As shown below, some groups of the population were **significantly more likely** than average to report this.

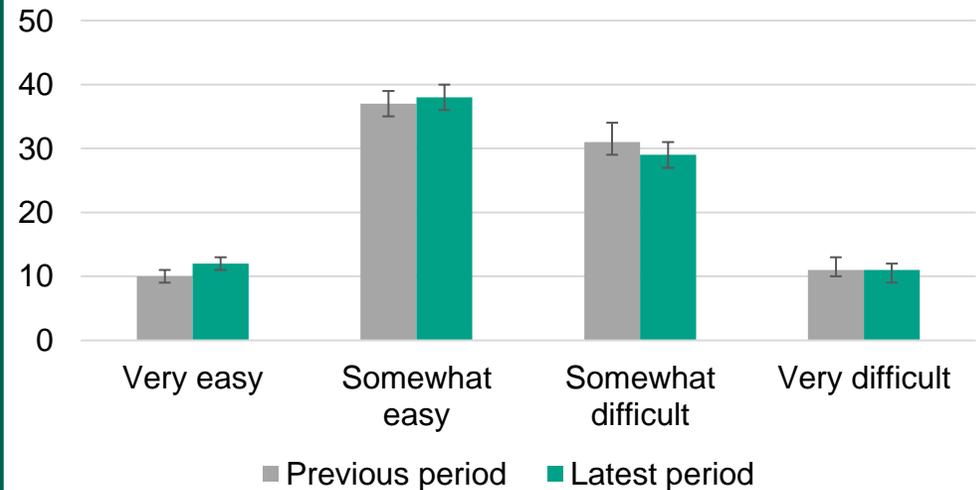
% saying that they were occasionally, hardly ever, or never able to keep comfortably warm in their home in the past two weeks



Among adults who pay energy bills, difficulty in affording energy bills has remained broadly similar, with **40%** finding it **somewhat or very difficult** to afford their energy bills in the latest period, compared to 42% in the previous period.

The slight reduction in adults finding it difficult to keep warm or afford their energy bills may reflect the relatively warmer weather in the UK than average during February 2023 [according to the Met Office](#).

% reporting difficulty affording energy bills in the latest and previous period



Access to NHS

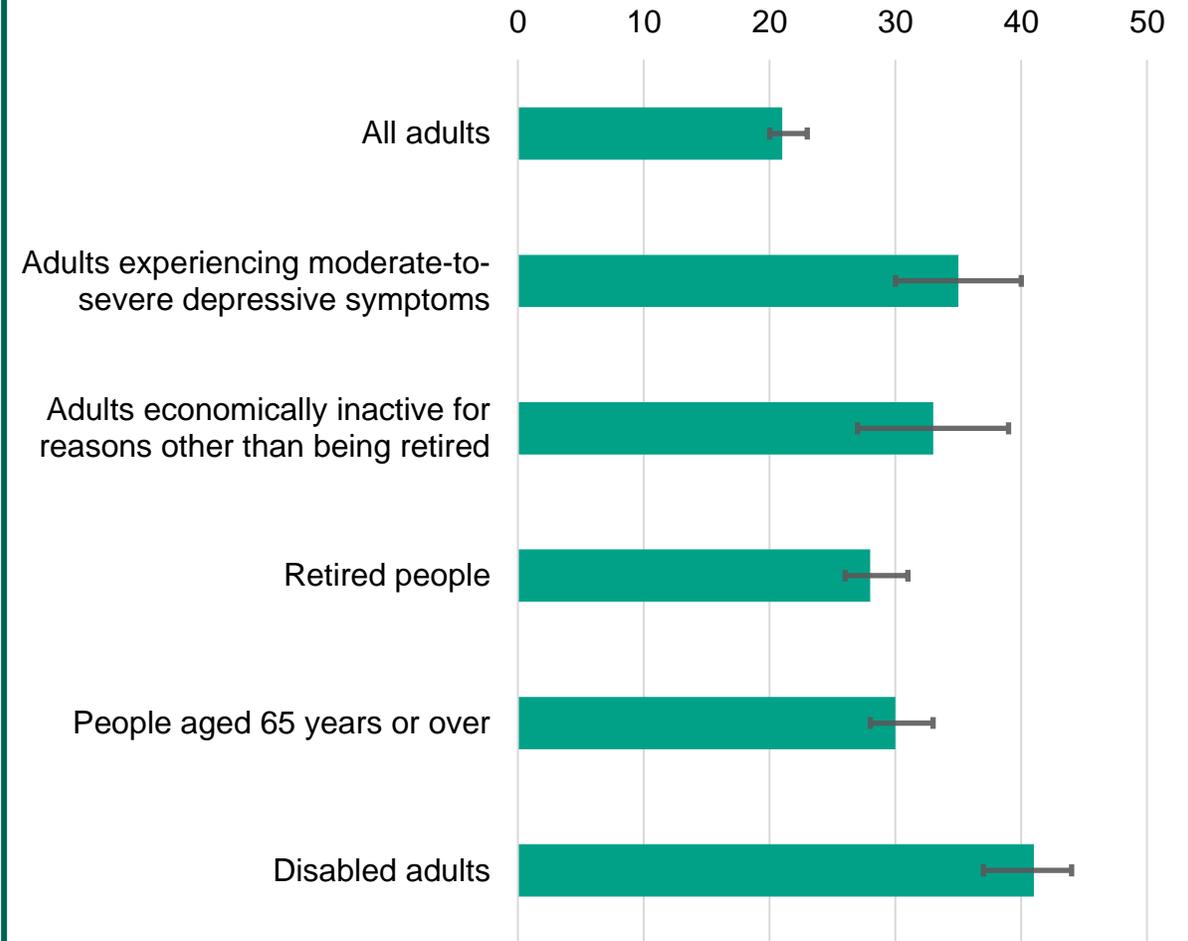
The proportion of adults who reported currently **waiting for a hospital appointment, test or to start receiving medical treatment through the NHS** remained at **21%** between the previous and latest period.

14% persistently reported this, whilst 7% reported this only in the latest period, and 7% reported this only in the previous period.

Groups of the population **significantly more likely** than on average among all adults to report waiting included:

- **Disabled** people (31% persistently reported this, 10% reported this in the latest period only and 13% reported this in the previous period only)
- People experiencing **moderate-to-severe depressive symptoms** (25% persistently reported this, 10% reported this in the latest period only and 12% reported this in the previous period only)
- People who were **economically inactive for reasons other than being retired** (23% persistently reported this, 9% reported this in the latest period only and 10% reported this in the previous period only)
- People aged **65 years or over** (19% persistently reported this, 11% reported this in the latest period only and 8% reported this in the previous period only)
- **Retired** people (18% persistently reported this, 10% reported this in the latest period only and 8% reported this in the previous period only)

% who reported currently waiting for a hospital appointment, test or to start receiving medical treatment through the NHS



Methodology

This publication contains data and indicators from the ONS Winter Survey, which engaged with participants who had previously taken part in the ONS Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

The ONS sampled 5,630 individuals who took part in the Winter Survey between 22 November 2022 to 8 January 2023. The responding sample contained 4,494 individuals, representing an 80% response rate. Survey weights were applied to make estimates representative of the population.

Estimates published in this release may differ slightly from estimates published in previous releases from the Winter Survey referring to the same period and question. This is because estimates in this publication are based upon adults who had taken part in both periods of the Winter Survey, and not those who had taken part within a single period only.

This publication contains results from the same time period and sample as a previous ONS publication released on 30th March [‘The impact of winter pressures on different population groups in Great Britain: 15 to 26 February 2023’](#).





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Hoping and Coping: How families were faring in March 2023

Summary of the Resolution Foundation report: [Hoping-and-coping.pdf](https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/2023/03/hoping-and-coping-how-families-were-faring-in-march-2023)
([resolutionfoundation.org](https://www.resolutionfoundation.org))

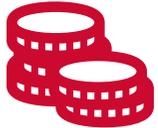
Overview

To assess how households were managing the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, the Resolution Foundation commissioned a YouGov survey of over 10,000 adults aged 18 and above in March 2023. This follows on from a similar survey taken in November 2022.

The report, funded by the Health Foundation, examines what action people have taken in the face of rising prices, and shows how the crisis has affected living standards and health, looking specifically at the impact across different income and age groups.



The Resolution Foundation reports that while inflation is set to fall back over the coming months, families in the UK continue to be in the midst of a cost-of-living crisis. **Prices are still over 10% higher than a year ago**, with the **cost of food up almost a fifth (19.1%)**, and families' main sources of income are not keeping up, with **pay 4% lower in real terms** than at the start of 2022, and **not set to recover fully until early 2026**.



Almost half (46%) of respondents said that their **financial situation** in March 2023 is worse than in December 2022, and **12% said it had become a lot worse**.



Three-quarters (75%) of survey respondents in March 2023 reported **cutting back on spending**, consistent with behaviour reported in November 2022. Cutting back was more common among those on the **lowest incomes** and **middle-aged adults**: 27% of adults in the poorest income quintile and around three-in-ten adults aged 35-44 (30%) and 45-54 (31%) reported trying to 'cut back a lot', compared to 14% of the richest adults and 14% of adults aged 75 and above.



Food and Energy Insecurity

Reducing energy consumption was the most commonly reported way to cut back (**59%** of all adults) and was common across all age groups.

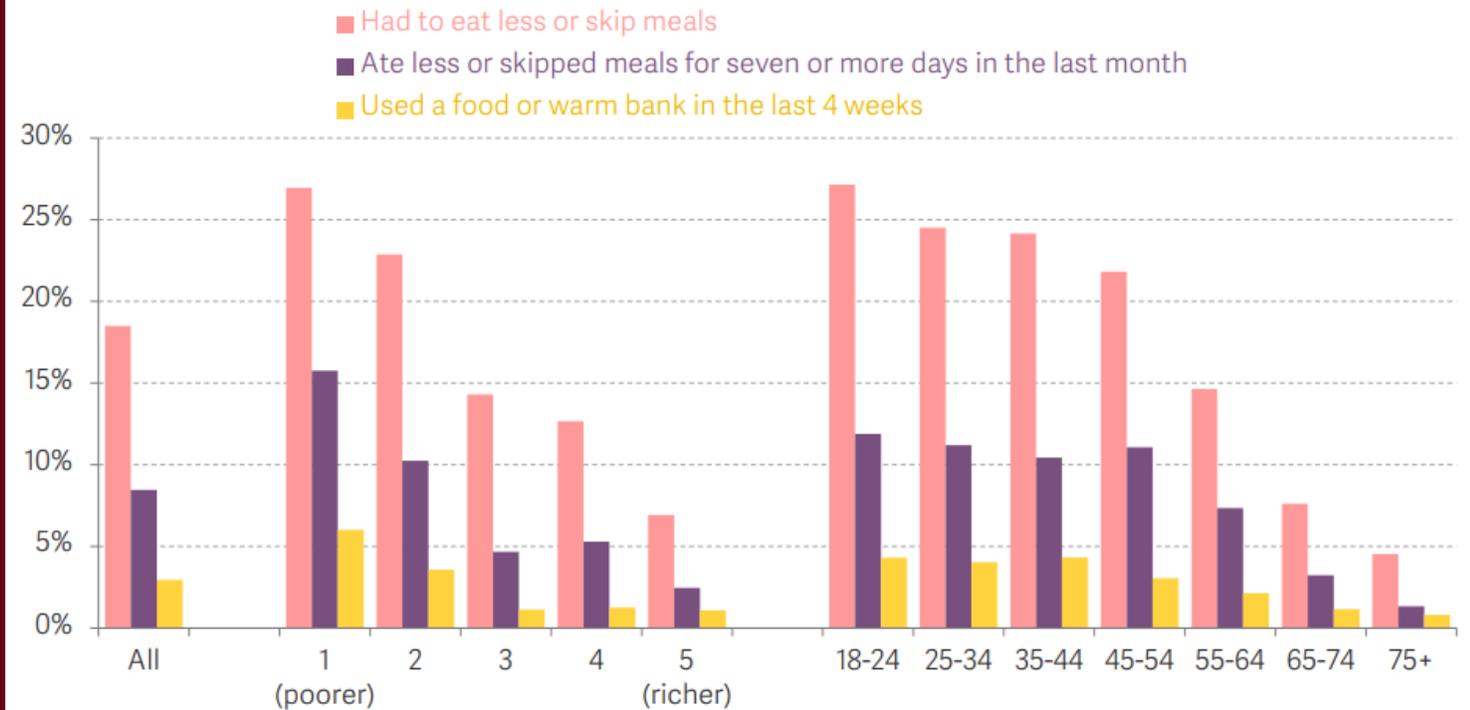
The next most common consumption area for cutting back was on **food (53%** of all adults). Here middle-aged adults (35-54) were almost twice as likely to cut back compared to those aged 75 and above.

Overall, **one-in-seven (16%)** adults in the **bottom-income quintile** ate less or skipped meals for seven or more days in the last month, twice as much as the population as a whole (8%).

A fifth of survey respondents reported being in **food insecurity**, broadly the same level as in November 2022, but around **three-times higher** than in **2019-20**.

FIGURE 23: 1-in-12 individuals ate less or skipped meals for seven days in the past month

Percentage of respondents skipping meals due to not having enough money and using a food or warm bank in the past month, by age group and equivalised income quintile: UK, 6-13 March 2023



Health and Mental Health

30% of adults reported a **decline in their health** due to the higher cost of living. This was more common among the **poorest** adults (**35%** of those in the bottom-income quintile) and adults aged **25-34** (**40%**). Over **40%** of adults are showing signs of **poor mental health** and emotional distress, but this is more pronounced among **younger** people: over half (**52%**) of 25-34-year-olds reporting that they were in emotional distress in March 2023.

FIGURE 26: A worsening financial position is linked to a deterioration in health as a result of the cost of living crisis

Percentage of respondents that reported reporting various health consequences, by financial situation: UK, 6-13 March 2023

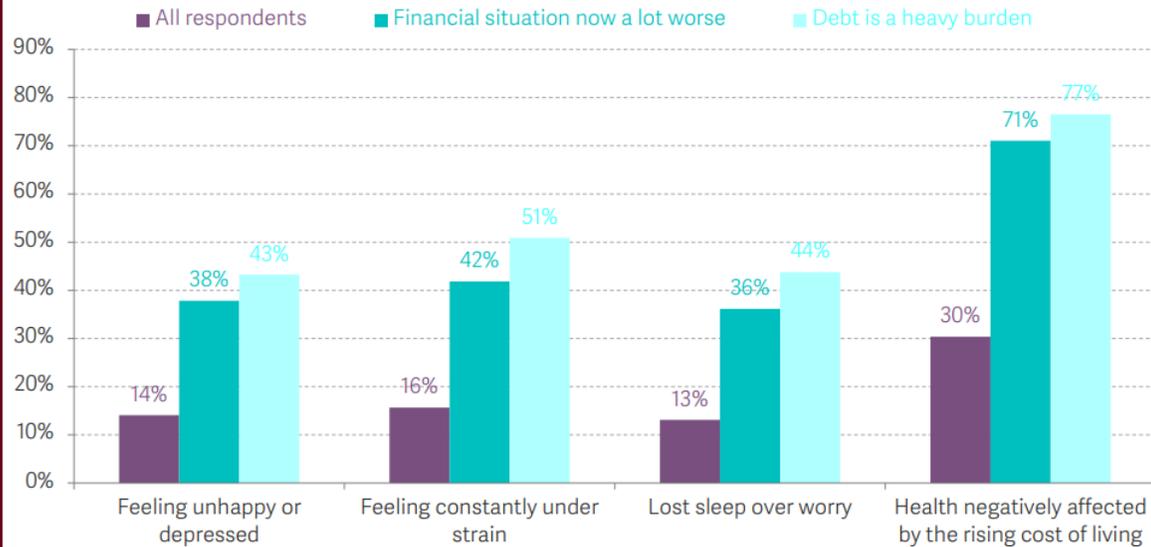
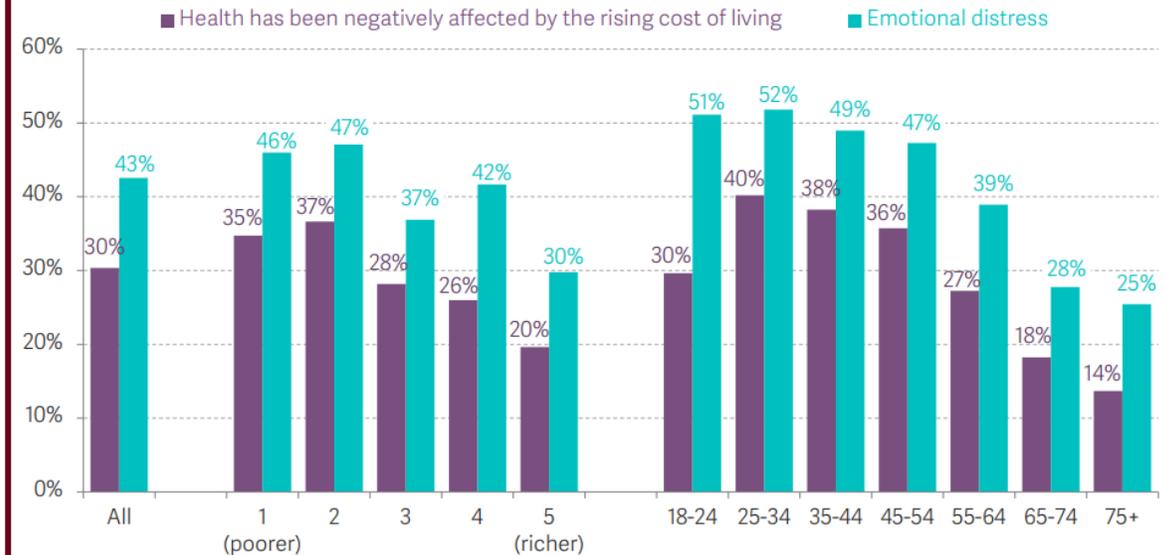


FIGURE 27: Younger adults were twice as likely as their older counterparts to report their health has deteriorated as a result of the increased cost of living

Percentage of respondents reporting health consequences, by age group and equivalised income quintile: UK, 6-13 March 2023



The report highlights a strong association between worsening mental health and some of the coping measures adults used to get by: **14%** of respondents reported feeling unhappy or depressed much more than usual, but this increases to **19%** among those who **used their savings** during the crisis, and **29%** among those that had fallen into **bill arrears**. There are also associations between **food insecurity** and poor mental health: among those who are experiencing severe food insecurity, **45%** felt much more unhappy or depressed than usual.



Savings, debt and arrears

33% of respondents reported **saving less** money, **10%** received **financial help** from family or friends, and **3%** accessed a **food or warm bank** to make ends meet in the last four weeks. **Poorer** households were just as likely to save less money as richer households, but they were **five and a half times** more likely to use a food or warm bank.

Between **41%** and **48%** of **18-74** year-olds reported **using savings** to support their living standards. However, **younger** adults were most likely to see their **savings fall below £1,000** over the winter. **15%** of adults reported that they had **no savings at all** by March 2023, rising to **almost a quarter (23%)** in the **bottom-income quintile**.

26% adults had used **formal lending**, such as credit cards and overdrafts, to make ends meet in the past three months.

One-in-eight (12%) missed a **priority bill payment** in the previous three months (up from 10% in November 2022). This type of borrowing was most prevalent among poorer and younger people, with **a fifth** of those aged **18-24** reporting falling behind on one or more bills. By contrast, fewer than 1-in-20 adults aged 65 and above report missing a priority bill payment.

FIGURE 16: Young people and those from a low-income family were more likely to have missed bill payments than older adults and those on higher incomes

Percentage of respondents reporting missing one or more payments of a priority bill between December 2022 and March 2023, by age group and equivalised income quintile: UK, 6-13 March 2023

