

Cost of Living

An insight report looking at how the cost of living may have affected the health and wellbeing of people living in Salford

Spring 2023

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Background

About Healthwatch Salford

Healthwatch Salford is your health and social care champion. Whether you've had a good or bad experience, we can use your feedback to improve services for everyone and we have the power to make NHS leaders and other care providers listen to what you have to say. We're completely independent and impartial and anything you say is confidential. We also offer information and advice to help you to get the support you need. Our service is free, simple to use and can make a real difference to people in Salford and beyond.

About this project

National data from Healthwatch England has showed a worrying increase in the number of people avoiding vital care.

The impact the cost of living crisis is having on many people's ability to heat their homes and eat well has been widely reported. However, this new data suggests people are increasingly avoiding booking/attending NHS appointments or taking up prescriptions and over-the-counter medications because of the costs. We wanted to hear from the people of Salford, of how this is affecting them.

During Spring 2023, we carried out a survey based upon questions set nationally by Healthwatch England, which explored how people felt the rising cost of living had affected them. The results of that survey are presented in this report and shared publically along with Salford City Council and Healthwatch England, giving the people of Salford a platform to be heard nationally as well as locally.

What the results said

We carried out a snapshot survey of 76 people in Salford, asking them 7 questions about how the cost of living might be affecting their health and wellbeing.

How people described their current financial situation

For our first question, we wanted to measure how people felt their current financial situation was. We gave them 5 options, asking them to choose which one they felt reflected their situation the best:

- Only **3** people felt very comfortable (they had more than enough money for living expenses and a lot spare to save or spend on extras or leisure)
- **31** people felt quite comfortable (they had enough money for living expenses and a little spare to save or spend on extras or leisure)
- **26** people didn't feel very comfortable (they had just enough money for living expenses but little else)
- **12** people didn't feel comfortable at all (they didn't have enough money for living expenses and sometimes or often they ran out of money)
- **3** people couldn't decide about their financial situation

38 people went on to tell us that their physical health has got worse (10 saying it had got a lot worse), with 34 saying it hadn't changed at all, during the last 2 months.

For the same period of time, 41 people further added that their mental health had got worse (12 saying it had got a lot worse), with 28 saying it hadn't changed at all.

We went on to explore how people felt their financial situation was going over the last six months.

- 4 people felt it had got a little better
- 17 people felt it hadn't changed at all
- 28 people felt it had got a little worse
- 26 people felt it had got a lot worse
- 1 person wasn't sure if their situation had changed at all

How the cost of living may have affected peoples lifestyles

Next, we presented people with a list of lifestyle statements, asking them to select whether they had made the change, would consider making the change in the future, or would not make the change. Staying warm was seen as an area where people had made the most lifestyle changes with 57 people saying that they 'had not turned the heating on when they usually would', and 54 saying that they 'had put more clothes on than usual to stay warm'. In addition, 14 people said that they would consider putting on more clothes to stay warm, with another 10 people saying that they would consider not turning the heating on when they usually would.

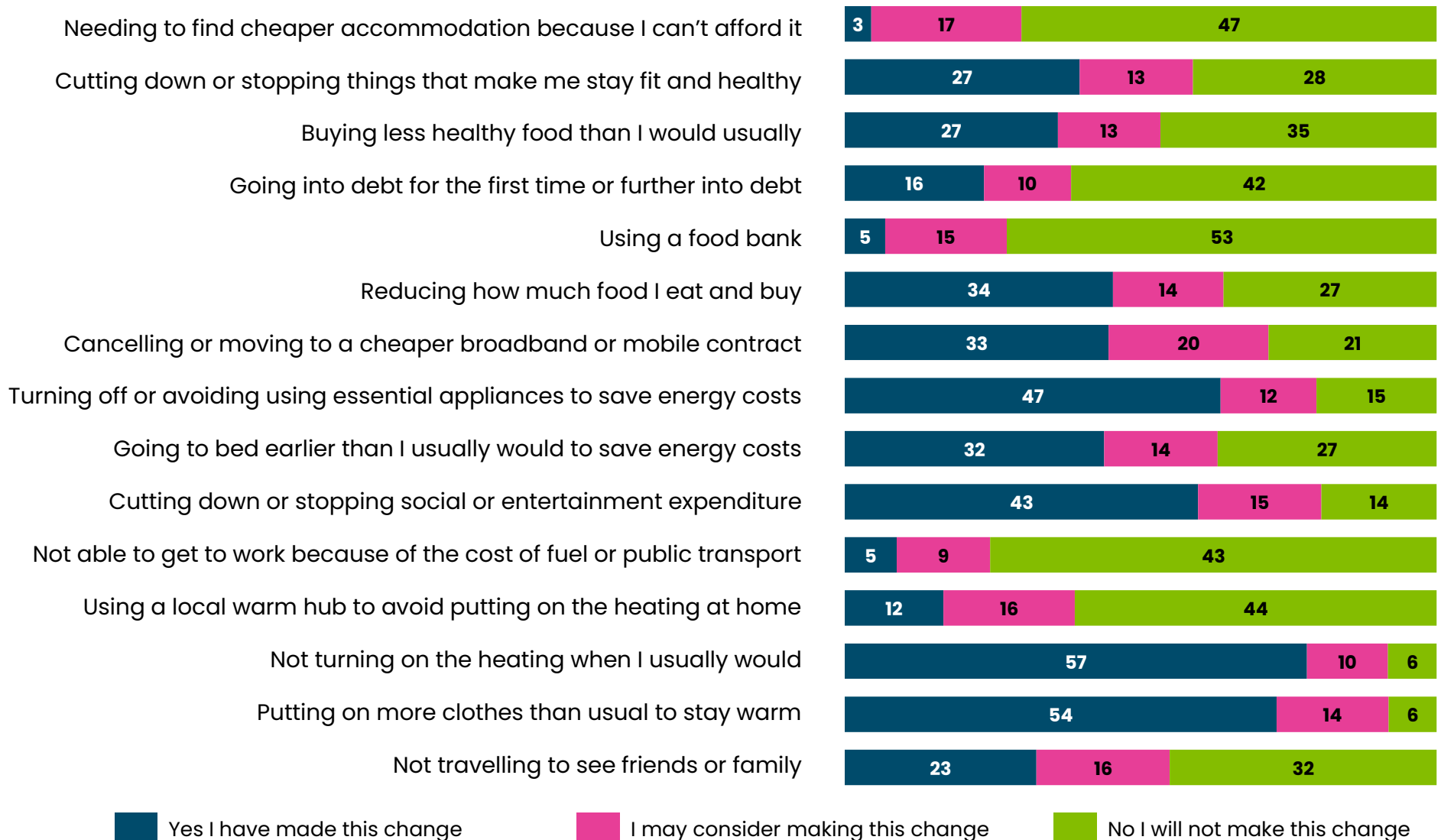
This was closely followed by conserving energy and limiting bills with 47 people telling us that they had turned off or were avoiding using essential appliances (e.g. the oven), with a further 12 people saying that they may consider making this change.

Cutting down or stopping social or entertainment expenditure was seen as the next biggest change with 43 people telling us that they had already made this change, with a further 15 saying that they may consider making this change in the future.

When it came to visiting friends and family, just under half of the people (32) said that they would not make this change, with 23 already having done it and 16 others considering doing it.

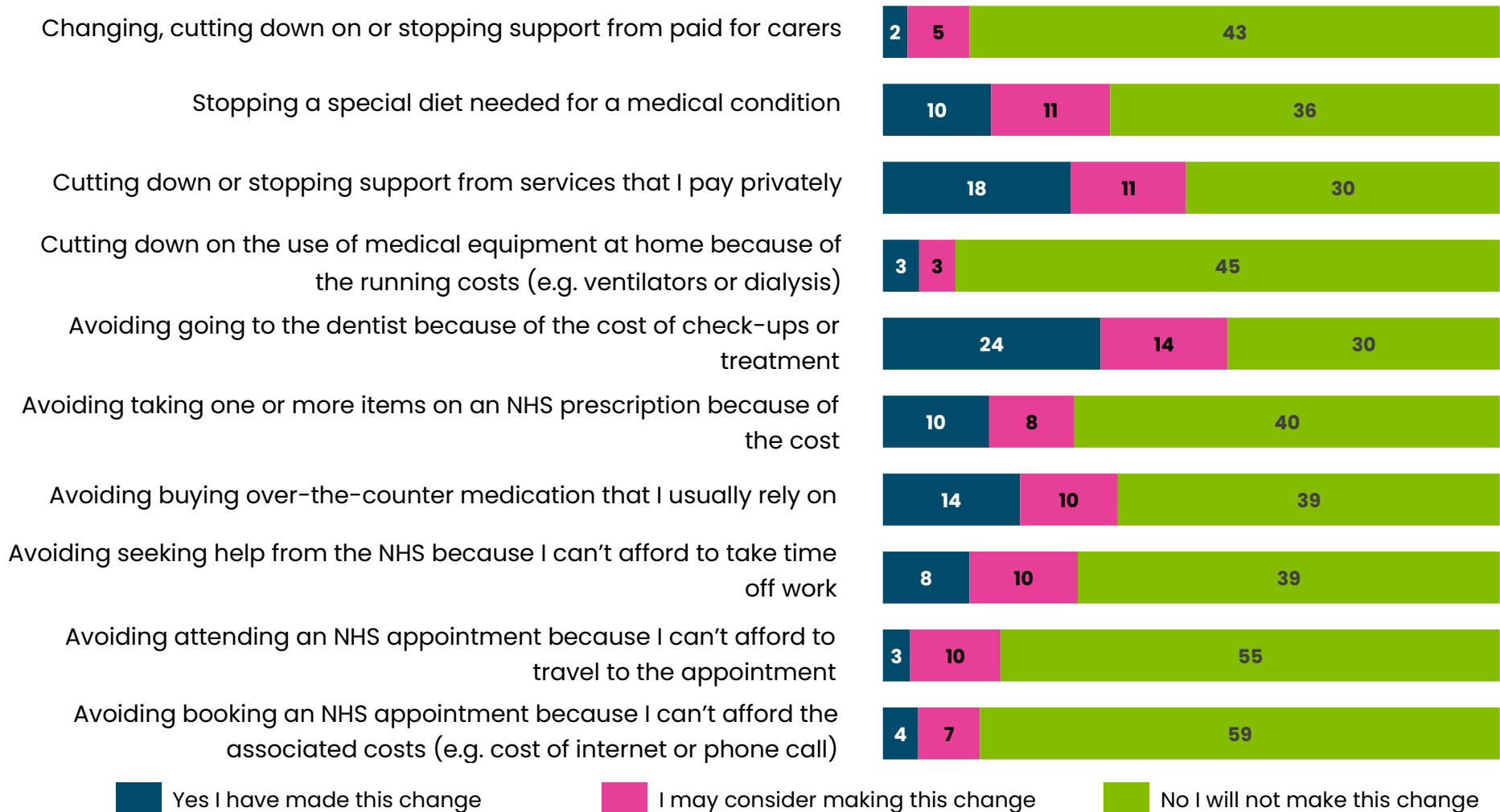
The majority of people (43) said that the cost of fuel or transport would not compromise their efforts of getting to work, along with 47 people who said that they would not look for cheaper accommodation.

How people scored each lifestyle statement



How the cost of living may have affected peoples access to healthcare

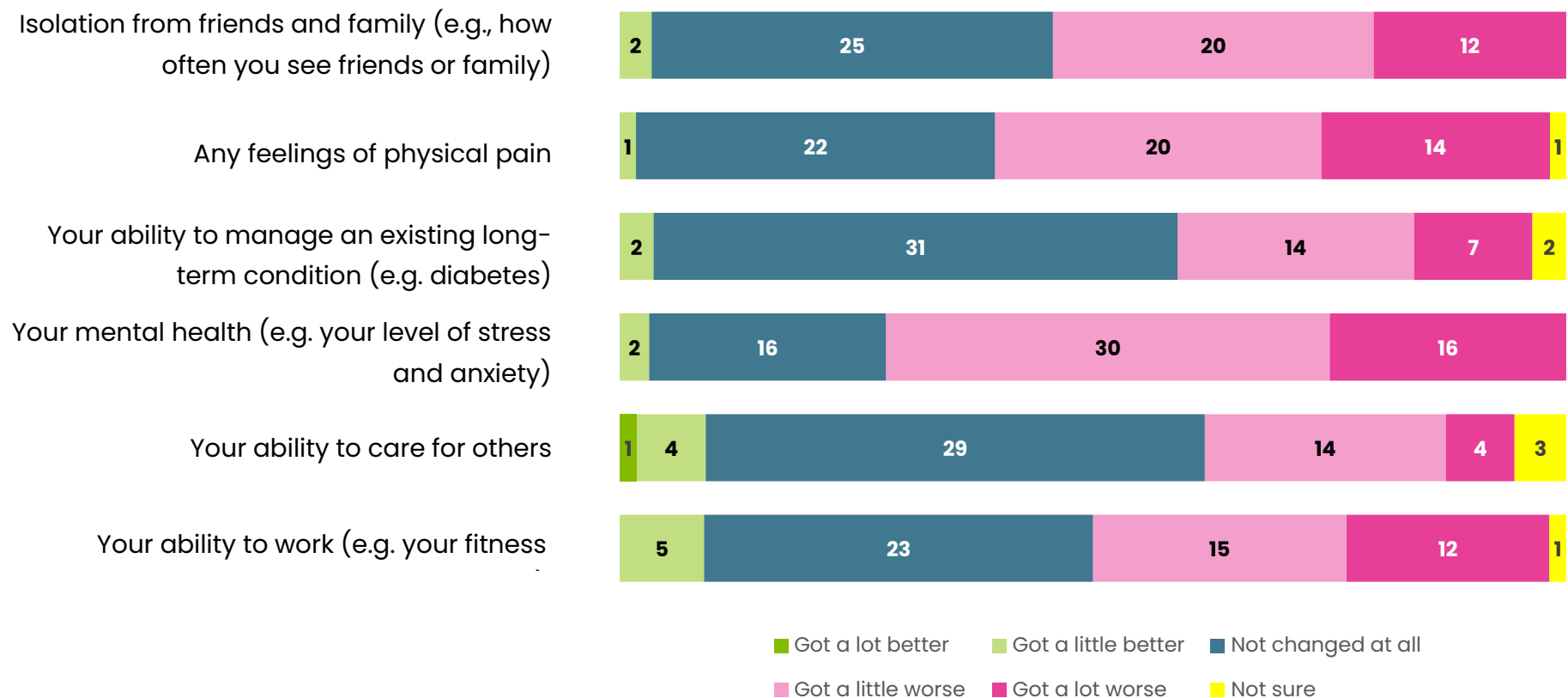
We next wanted to find out how the cost of living had affected peoples health and access to appointments. The majority of people felt that despite the cost of living, it wouldn't encourage them to make changes as to how they accessed healthcare with the exception of dentistry, where more than half (38) said that they have avoided or would consider avoiding going to the dentist because of the cost of check-ups or treatment.



What the impact was for those people who had made changes

We asked people to specifically think about the changes that they had already made and how these may have impacted on other areas of their lives. Generally, people felt that things hadn't changed much at all with the exception of their mental health (e.g. levels of stress and anxiety), where the majority (46) of people told us that it had got worse. Isolation from friends and family was also seen as leaving people in a worse situation than before.

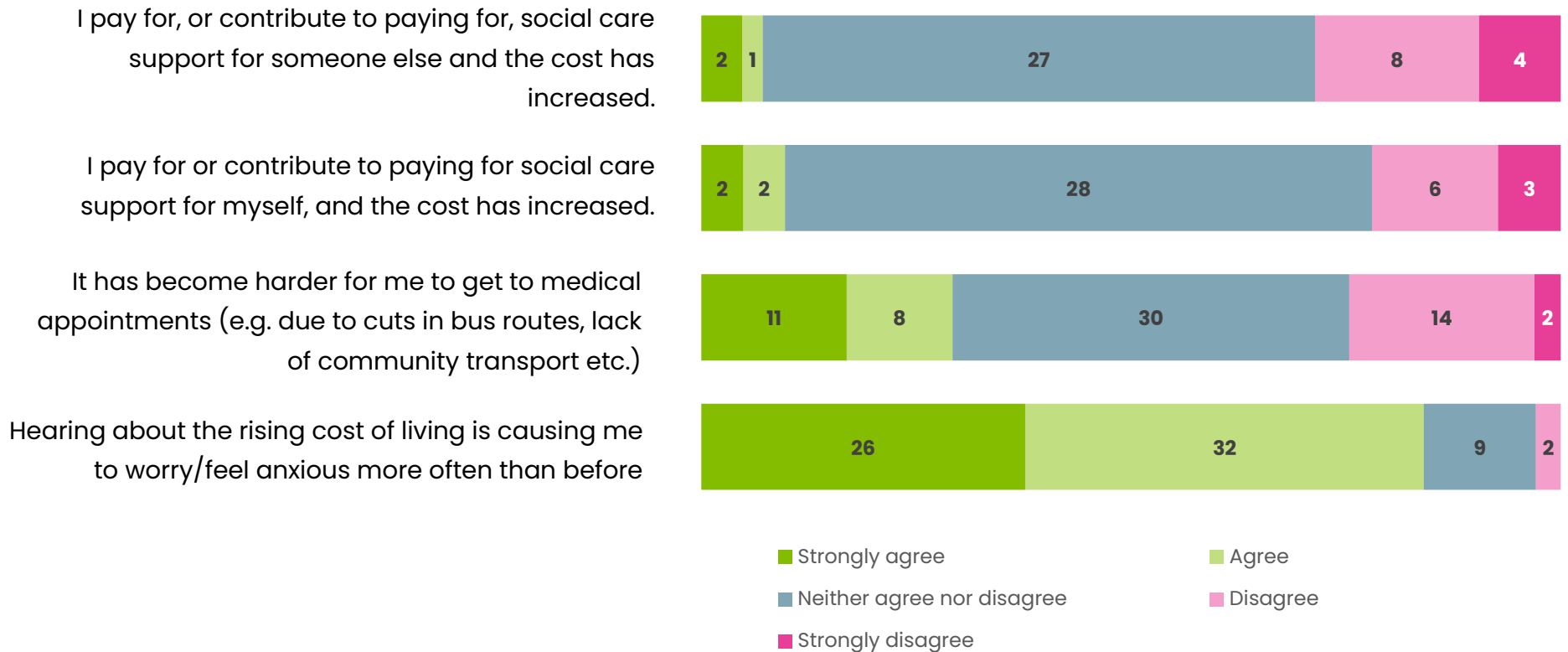
How people rated any changes they had made



How people felt about the cost of living

For our last question, we wanted to know how much people agreed or disagreed with 4 general statements about the cost of living. Whilst the majority of people agreed that hearing about the cost of living was causing them to worry or feel more anxious than before, most people felt they couldn't agree or disagree with remaining statements.

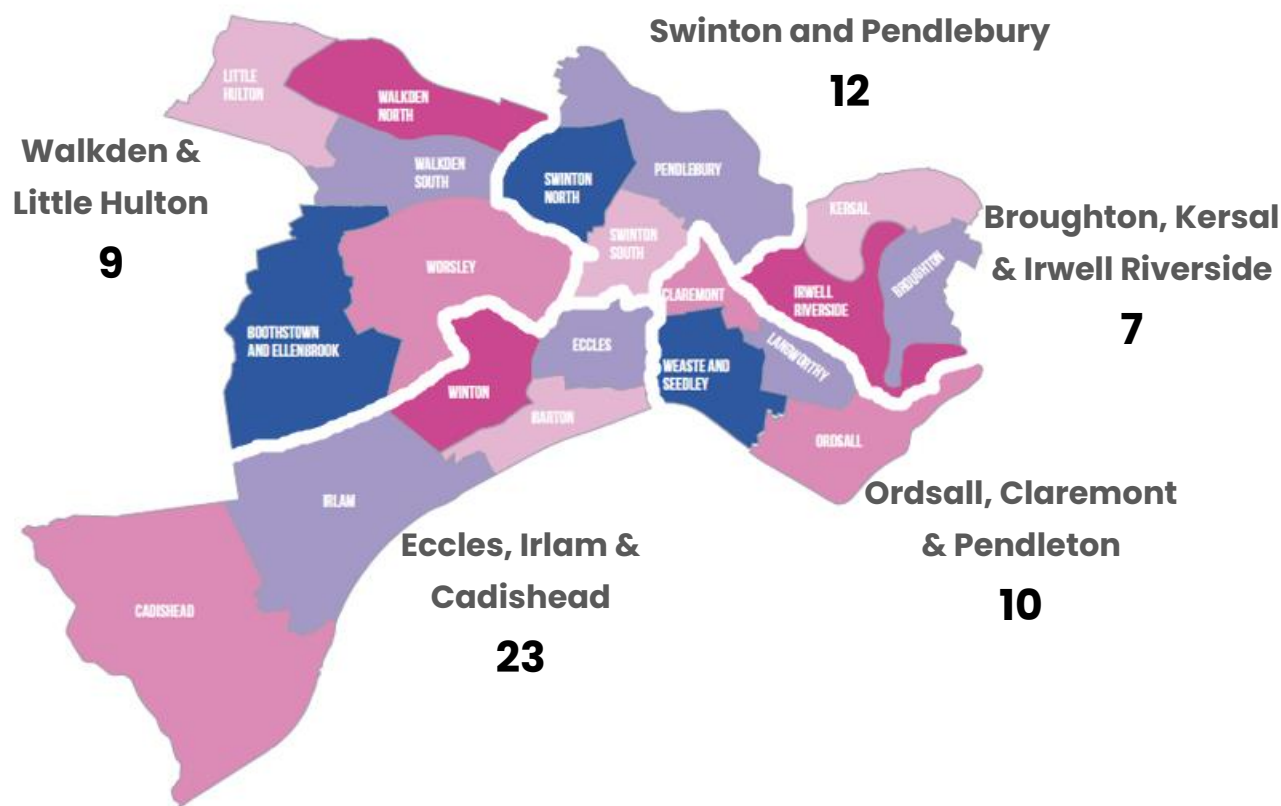
How people agreed or disagreed with the following statements



Who took part in the survey

In addition to the main questions, we asked people if they would be happy to give further information about their background. 65 (92%) of our survey respondents, went on to give us this additional information.

Where the respondents lived



What their ages were

16-17 years	1
18-24 years	4
25-49 years	19
50-64 years	15
65-79 years	19
80 years +	5

What gender they identified with

Woman	51
Man	11
Non binary	1

Their living arrangements

16 respondents had 1 or 2 dependent children living in their home	45 respondents didn't have any dependent children living in their home
24 respondents lived with a partner	22 respondents lived alone
10 respondents lived with other adult members of their family	3 respondents lived with other adults who were not related to them

What their sources of income were

Wages/salary	31
State retirement pension	20
Occupations/private pension	15
Disability benefits	10
Means-tested benefits	7
Income from self-employment	3
Other benefits	3
Student loan	1
Some other form of income	1

What race they identified as

Asian or Asian British	
Bangladeshi	1
Indian	1
Black/African/Black British/Caribbean	
African	1
White	
British, English, Northern Irish, Scottish and Welsh	56
Any other White background	2

Additional background information

- 26 respondents considered themselves to have a long term condition
 - 14 respondents considered themselves to have a disability
 - 13 respondents considered themselves to be a carer



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