

Healthwatch Hackney Community Voice

Cost of living insight report

Hackney Health and Wellbeing Board

9th November 2022



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9th November 2022

healthwatch

Introduction

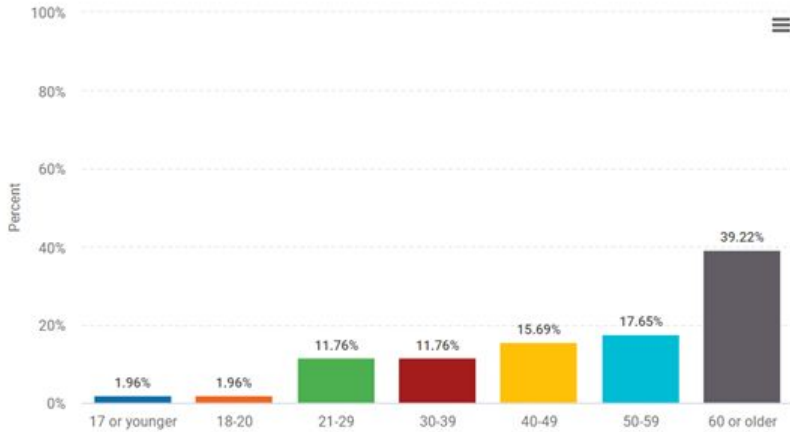
This report captures how local people are experiencing the cost of living crisis.

We know the health and mental wellbeing of people across the country is suffering as the cost of living rises. Healthwatch Hackney wanted to find out what this looks like for our residents in Hackney. This report is for information only, and will form the basis of a wider piece of work as we move into the winter months.

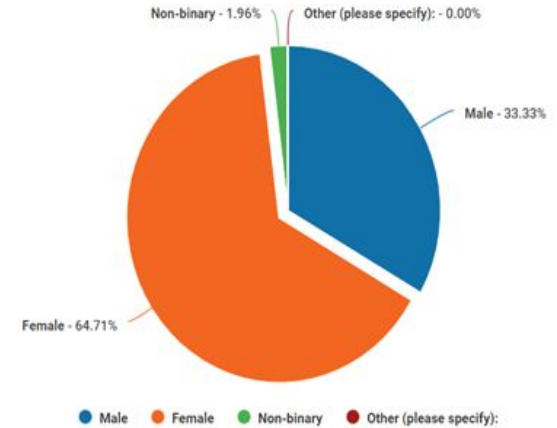
Healthwatch Hackney asked 56 local residents about their experience of the rising cost of living. We created a survey and spoke to local people to help them express their experiences as well as gathering some responses online.

Who we spoke to

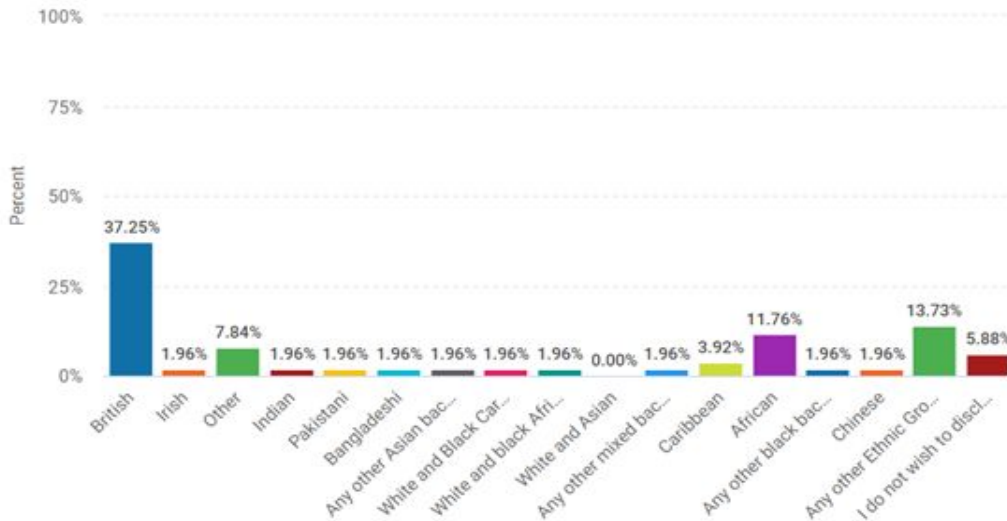
Can you tell us how old you are?



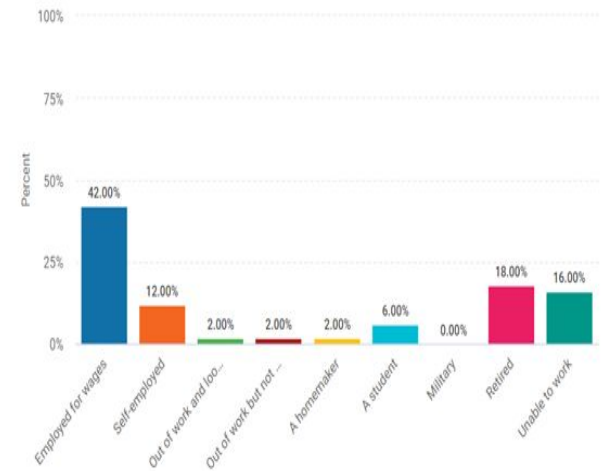
How do you think of yourself?



Can you tell us your ethnicity?



Can you tell us your employment status?



What we heard

89% of residents told us rising costs are already having an impact on their lives.

81% told us they were less able to afford additional purchases than they were at this time last year.

Concerningly, 61% of residents we spoke to told us they are struggling to afford essential costs such as food or electricity.

Residents told us how rising costs are already affecting them

“Bills going up and income is not going up as it is a catch 22 situation where you want to keep healthy and well when you have certain medical conditions you need heat and hot baths so it will have a great impact on my health.”

“Prioritisation of paying utilities means pulling back on purchasing things that make me happy: there's now a focus on survival.”

“Energy costs and heating for cancer patients is essential and draining financially. I live in a council property with single glazed windows and am extremely worried about how I will pay the energy bills.”

“In order to pay a dual energy bill X4 before the new price cap, I have halved hot water heating and cannot afford the room heating I need for my health problems.”

“Restrict spending, buying poor quality food and products, elimination of nonessential well being spending”

“I have a disability and everything is expensive now. And I am on benefit but I'm still receiving the same benefit but I think so expensive these days to afford.”

“Cutting down all expenses with essential items and food. Going for a winter without heating. Cannot afford to do anything out of the house like eating out.”

Residents told us about the effect of rising costs on their health and wellbeing

“more stressed, wondering what happens if I get enormous heating bill that I cannot pay!”

“I feel stressed all the time and panic every time I have to spend any more, even with cheap essential items”

“This is causing my mental illness to significantly worsen”

“Mentally affected as I feel broke all the time I can't enjoy myself”

“Yes it's affecting and I'm taking more medications for it because I'm stressed and depressed and I have anxiety.”

Residents told us about the impact on general physical health caused by cost of food and the need to cut down on additional expenses:

“Not being able to buy healthy food.”

“I have to give up my gym membership.”

We heard about the effect on people with long term and serious health conditions

"I am a patient who is already suffering from kidney problems and diabetes, this means that with the high rise of food for example, I cannot support myself especially since I have a special diet and my benefit have not gone up to help me manage my life."

"I've had to delay treatment that was originally being delayed due to Covid in order to keep working so that I can pay my mortgage and arrears. I am depressed and anxious, not sleeping or eating properly."

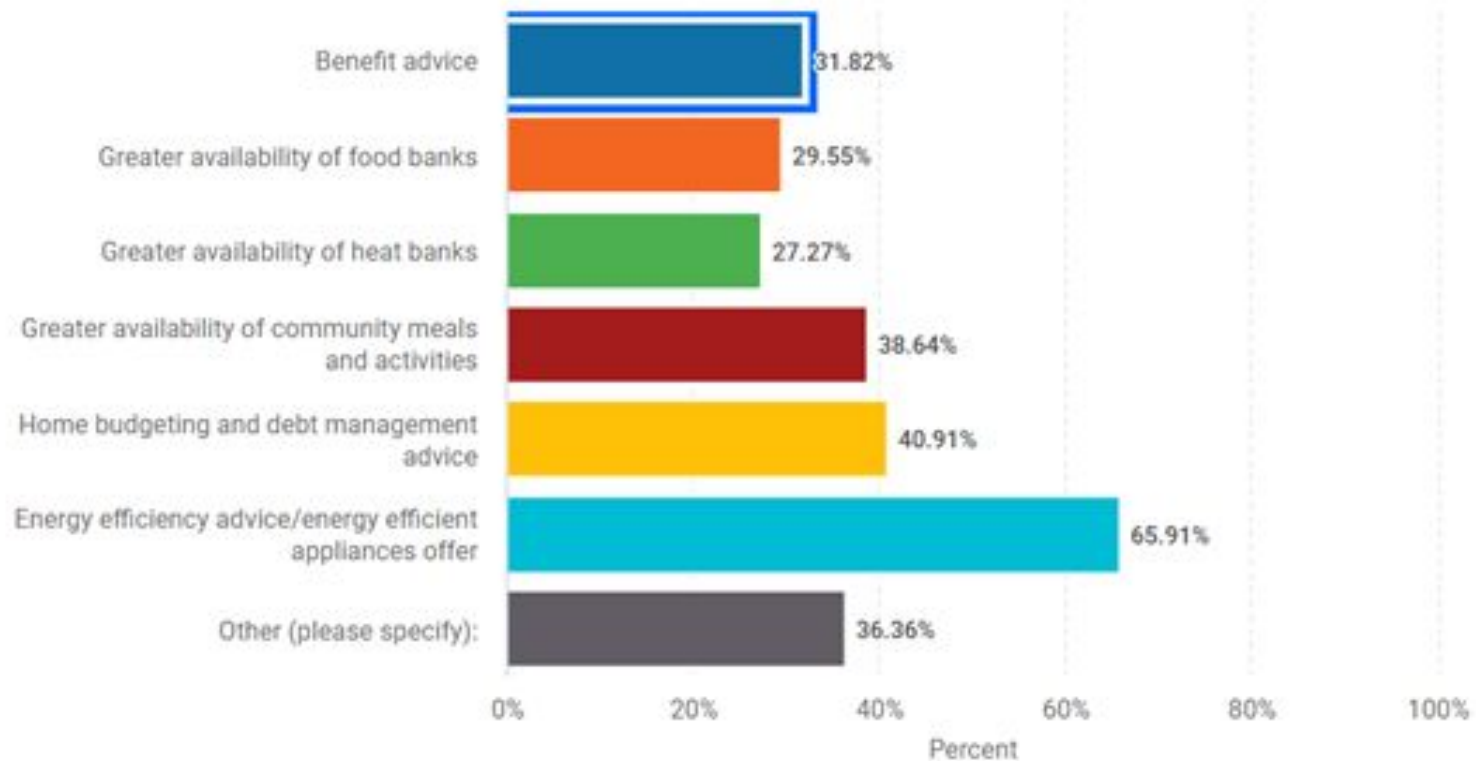
"Recovering from cancer and suffering from arthritis I need a warm flat otherwise I'm in pain."

"Stress. I have just had Cancer and have MS and I don't want to put the heating on even when I am cold in the house in the evening."

"Lack of sleep, tension headache, occipital bone tension, body aches."

We asked residents if any of the options below would improve their experience

Would any of the following improve your experience at this time?



Some suggestions from residents to help manage rising costs

“Help with applying for cost of living and winter fuel help. Because I have a special diet, the food bank will not help me.”

“Handyman service to fix drafts”

“Carers being paid a normal wage not £110 if you're lucky to live on.”

“Community kitchens would be better than food banks. Energy efficiency advice and support is very important.”

“help with my son's behaviour from social services for whom I am carer. I need help to apply for attendance allowance due to my dyslexia and spinal injury.”

“Increase of benefits to help with the increase of basic essentials such as food and utility bills.”

“Enterprise courses/support for second income.”

“Meals on wheels with fee as soon as it's nutritious and hygienic, emotional support.”

“To insulate my window.”

This report forms the basis of a wider piece of work which will extend through November.

We will explore these recommendations in depth over November to understand how residents would like to see these ideas taken forward in a way that is accessible.

Initial findings suggest the following:

Need for energy efficiency advice and schemes that can provide energy efficient appliances

Help to insulate properties

Community meals/kitchens, drop in centres and food banks - increase in availability and/or raising public awareness of available services

How budgeting and debt advice

A need to explore how specific health conditions are impacted by rising costs - in particular cancer and diabetes

A need to consider how public awareness is raised where some of these issues are already being addressed and solutions are available

Healthwatch Hackney will be exploring this issue in greater depth.

Are there any areas, themes or communities the Health and Wellbeing Board would like Healthwatch to focus on?

Is there a theme the HWB feels they can move forwards with additional insight provided by Healthwatch?