

<b>Title of Report</b>	Community Voice - cost of living update
<b>For Consideration By</b>	Health and Wellbeing Board
<b>Meeting Date</b>	9th November 22
<b>Classification</b>	
<b>Ward(s) Affected</b>	all
<b>Report Author</b>	Sally Beaven

Is this report for:

•	Information
	Discussion
	Decision

Why is the report being brought to the board?

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.

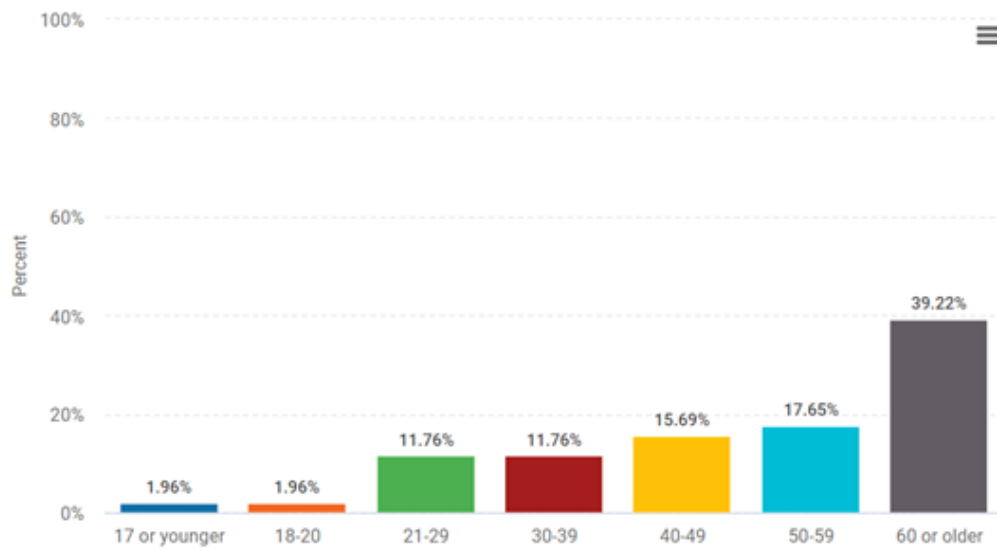
Has the report been considered at any other committee meeting of the Council or other stakeholders?

No

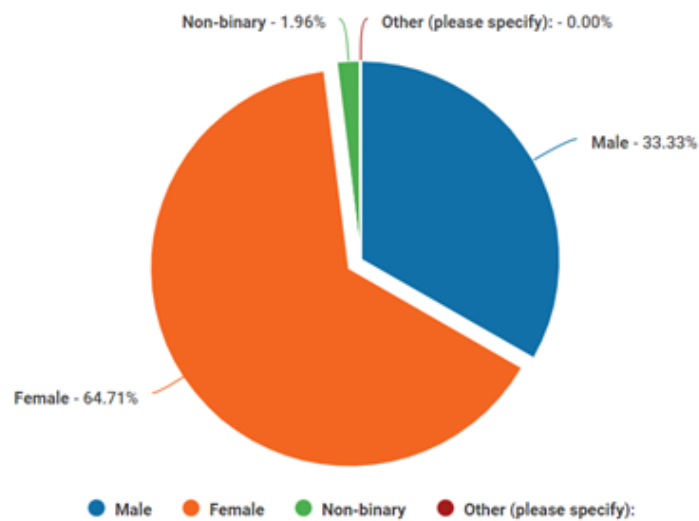
## 1. Summary

- 1.1. *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.*

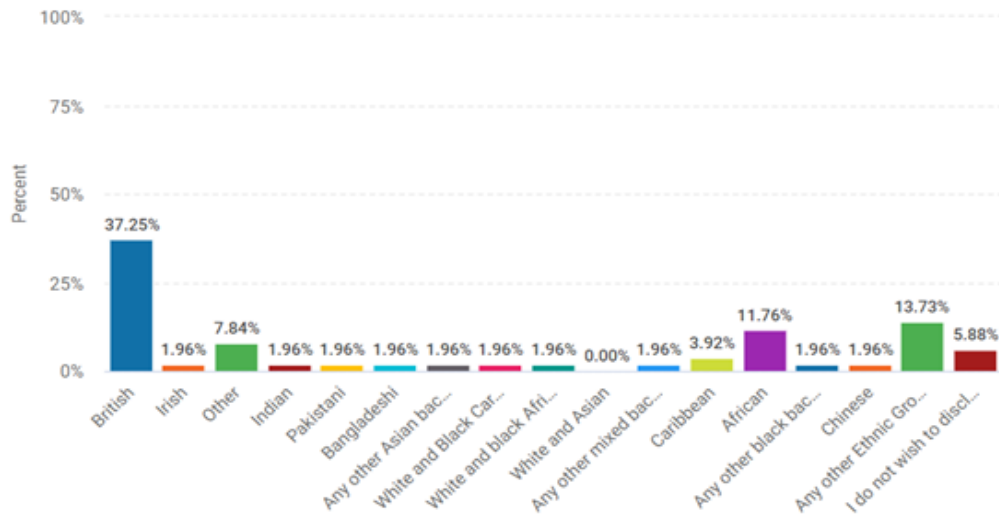
## Can you tell us how old you are?



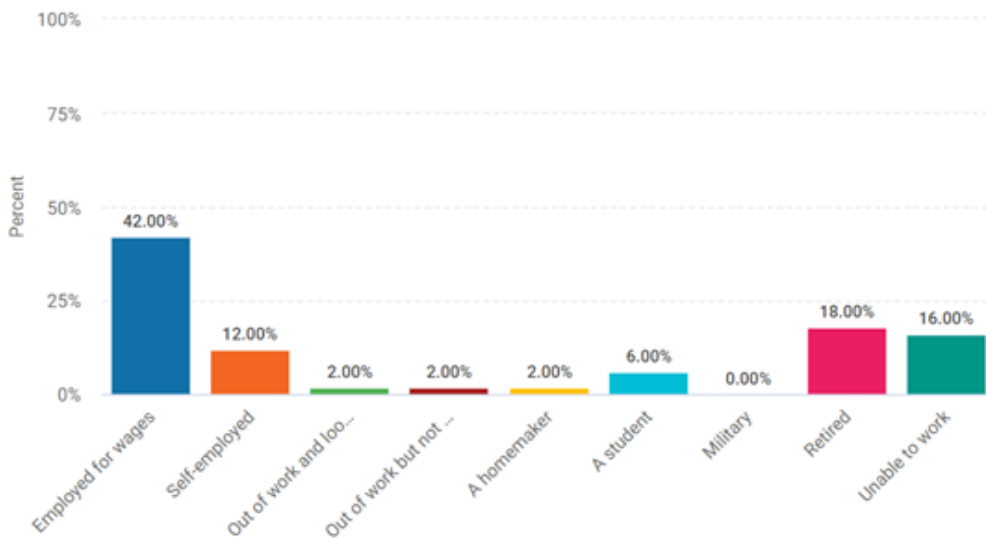
## How do you think of yourself?



Can you tell us your ethnicity?



Can you tell us your employment status?



**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.**

1.2 Residents told us how rising costs are already affecting them:

*"Rising cost is affecting my daily life in terms of feeding and accommodation."*

*"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."*

**1.3 We asked residents to describe the effects (if any) of rising cost on their health and wellbeing. Many residents described the negative impact rising costs are having on their mental health.**

*"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."*

**We heard 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."*

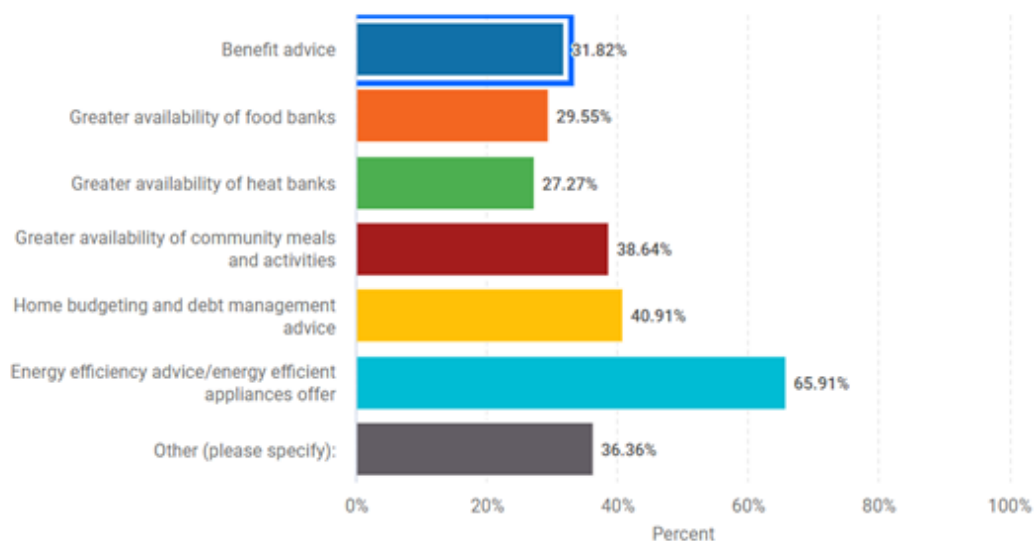
*"Stress. I have just had Cancer and have MS and I don't want to put the heating on even when I am cold in the house in the evening."*

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

1.4

We asked residents which of the following might improve their experience. The results show that advice around energy efficiency and/or schemes to provide more energy efficient appliances would help 66% of residents. Over 40% of residents spoken to would like access to home budgeting and debt management advice. Many residents would benefit from greater availability of community meals and activities, food banks and heat banks, as well as benefit advice.

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



1.5 Below are some of the suggestions residents gave us that would help them:

*"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 wom I am carer., 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."*

*"More help for single people."*

## 2. Recommendations

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

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 to them.

### 2.2 Question for Hackney Health and Wellbeing Board

**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?**

#### 2.2. Policy Context:

Please detail which, if any, of the Health & Wellbeing Strategy priorities this report relates to?

	Improving mental health
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	Increasing social connections
•	Supporting greater financial security
	All of the above
	None of the above

Please detail which, if any, of the Health & Wellbeing 'Ways of Working' this report relates to?

•	Strengthening our communities
	Creating, supporting and working with volunteer and peer roles
	Collaborations and partnerships: including at a neighbourhood level
•	Making the best of community resources
	All of the above
	None of the above

### 2.3. Equality Impact Assessment

*Consider equalities duties and the likely impact of a course of action on different groups of people.*

### 2.4. Consultation

Has public, service user, patient feedback/consultation informed the recommendations of this report?

•	Yes
	No

Have the relevant members/ organisations and officers been consulted on the recommendations in this report ?

•	Yes
	No

**Report Author**

Name Sally Beaven

Title Engagement and Coproduction Manager

Email [sally@healthwatchhackney.co.uk](mailto:sally@healthwatchhackney.co.uk)

Tel 07856 796512