



# **UNISON Cymru Wales Cost-of-Living Survey**

## **Autumn 2022**

### **Introduction**

The cost-of-living crisis has placed people in some very difficult positions and public service workers – the people delivering vital services in our communities, and their families are hurting.

This Autumn, UNISON Cymru Wales surveyed members across all the sectors we represent to gain a detailed understanding of how people are being impacted. A staggering 6,000 people took part, and the results are unsettling and illustrate that both the Welsh government and UK government must offer greater support to public service workers.

### **About UNISON Cymru Wales**

UNISON is the UK's largest trade union organising and representing 1.3 million public sector workers UK wide, including 100,000 public sector workers across Wales.

Our members, 85 per cent of whom are women, work in the delivery of public services through direct public sector provision, private and voluntary contractors providing public services, and in the essential utilities. They include frontline staff and managers working full or part-time in public administration, local authorities, health and social care, the police and justice service, universities, colleges and schools, the electricity, gas, environment and water industries, transport, and in the voluntary and community sectors.

### **Cost of Living Survey**

UNISON Cymru Wales surveyed 6,067 members about how the cost of living crisis was affecting them, between 20 September and 3 October 2022.

The enormous scale of responses to the online survey provides powerful support for UNISON's continued campaign for greater investment in public service workers.

UNISON Cymru Wales members were asked about the effect of the cost of living crisis on budgeting and their mental health; whether the UK government understands the depth of the crisis; if they are considering changing job and if they are likely to make a new claim for in-work benefits.

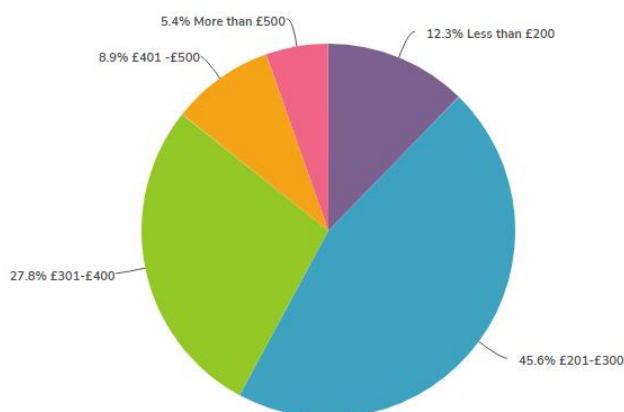
Nearly 100% of respondents believed the UK government does not understand how the cost-of-living crisis is affecting the daily lives of individuals and families across Wales.

A summary of the responses is provided here and a link to the full survey report is at the end of this document.

*Percentages have been rounded up or down in the written text*

### **How much have your monthly living costs increased by?**

- 46% £201-£300 (2,766 people)
- 28% £301-401 (1,689 people)
- 9% £401-500 (542 people)

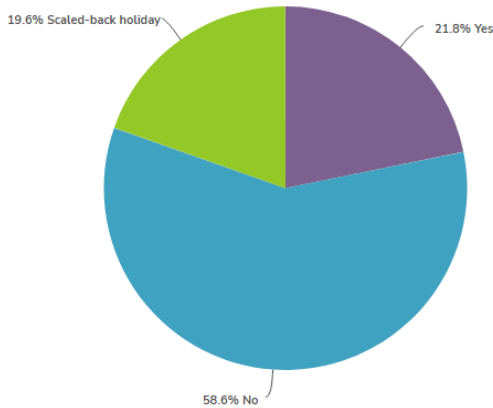


### **Which of the following have you done because of the cost of living crisis?**

- 17% gone without meals (1,025 people)
- 33% worked more hours (2,019 people)
- 20% asked for a loan from family or friends (1188 people)
- 5% used a food bank (274 people)
- 5% used debt advice service (319 people)
- 7% pawned possessions (404 people)
- 4% made a new claim for benefits (265 people)
- 85% reduced supermarket shop (5,144 people)
- 67% reduced family activities (4,067 people)
- 75% reduced socialising with friends (4,526 people)

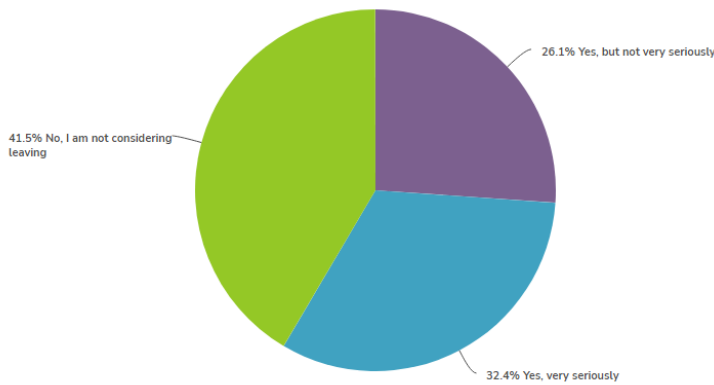
### Were you able to take a summer holiday this year?

- 59% No (3,552 people)
- 20% scaled back holiday (1,188 people)



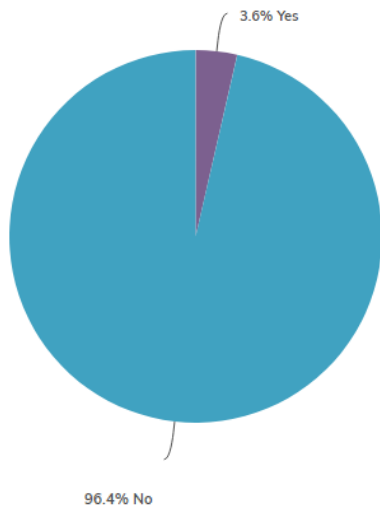
### Are you looking for a better paid job?

- 32% Yes, very seriously (1,964 people)
- 26% Yes, but not seriously (1,579 people)



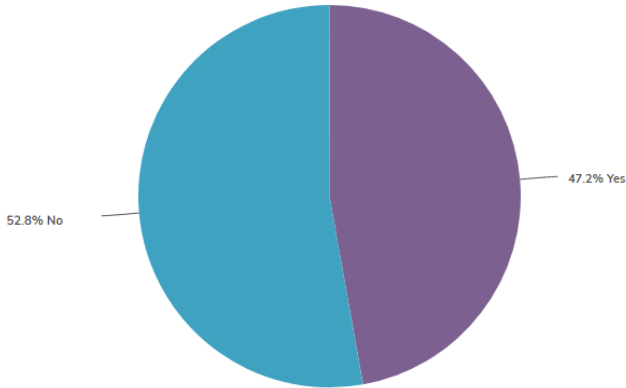
### Does the Westminster government understand cost of living crisis?

- 96% No (5,844 people)



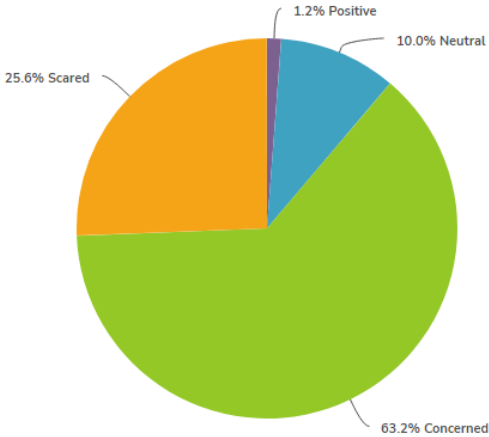
**Do you see yourself/your family having to make enquiries or applying for in-work benefits in the near future to be able to meet the increase in your/your family living costs?**

- 47% Yes (2,864 people)



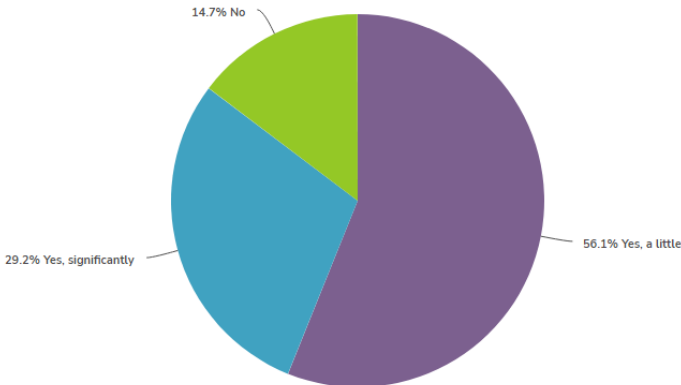
**How do you feel about your personal/family finances over the next six months?**

- 26% scared (1,553 people)
- 63% concerned (3,834 people)



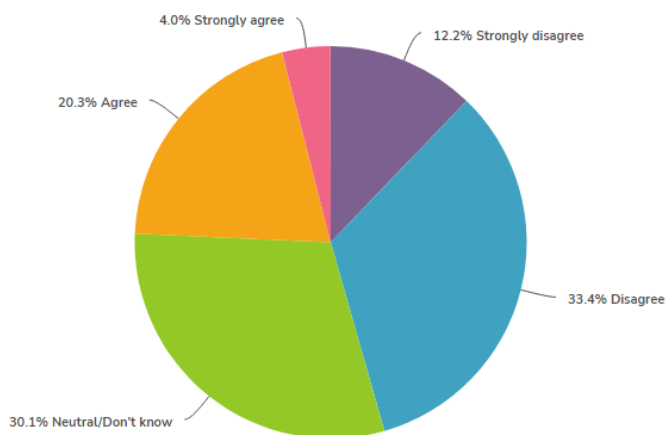
**Has the cost of living crisis negatively impacted on your mental health?**

- 29% Yes, significantly (1,773 people)
- 56% Yes, a little (3,400 people)



**To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statement: I am able to concentrate at work without worrying about my finances**

- 12% Strongly disagree with the statement (742 people)
- 33% Disagree with the statement (2,025 people)



UNISON offered respondents the chance to provide more detail to their answers. Here are some of the comments from public service workers around Wales. Names have been anonymised.

Name	Sector	Comment
Vanessa	Schools	My son's disabled with cerebral palsy, on benefits and lives in a bungalow on his own. His gas and electric have gone up from £85pm to £185pm and he's asked me when he should put the heating on. I am worrying how I will keep subsidising him on the money I earn. It's not feasible. If it wasn't for Universal Credit, I wouldn't be able to live in my flat, but I am contemplating moving in with him.
Claire	Care	Not putting heating on, going to work ill as can't afford to stay home Struggling with mental health as result cost of living
Sarah	Care	I'm finding it difficult to buy 3 children clothes and this is causing me to lose sleep
Debbie	NHS	Government out of touch, doesn't care about working class people.

Alison	<i>Not given</i>	Coming towards the end of each month, I have gone without meals and made do with water, a cup of tea or hot chocolate. I'm technically disabled and I hoped to save for a bathroom adaptation, but there's absolutely no money to put away. So I don't know if I'm going to be able to stay in my home.
Lucy	NHS	My partner who had been working p/t and considering retirement has now gone back to f/t. I think I will need to enquire about in-work benefits in future. I'm worried about debt spiralling out of control and I'm seriously looking for new job because of this crisis
Julie	Housing	I struggle to concentrate at work because of worrying about the cost of living. I work in housing supporting people needing assistance with this cost-of-living crisis
Kate	Police & Justice	I can't afford to fix my car, which is essential for work
Claire	NHS	Worrying about costs is all-consuming. I am seriously considering changing job
Chris	Council (not schools or care)	The cost-of-living crisis doesn't affect politicians and they don't know what we're going through
Kim	Further Education	I've sold my car to make ends meet and I'm always worrying about paying for food and the bills. I will need to look at Universal Credit.
Helen	Care	I am scared about my family finances and it's affecting me at work.
Jas	Care	The cost-of-living crisis has significantly impacted on my mental health
Emma	<i>Not given</i>	It's just a matter of time before debt has serious impact on mental health

The full survey data with charts and graphs can be accessed here:

[https://reporting.alchemer.eu/r/90022134\\_633aaf60c5fcf5.42562543](https://reporting.alchemer.eu/r/90022134_633aaf60c5fcf5.42562543)