

## People avoiding appointments and prescriptions due to rising costs

The number of people avoiding an NHS appointment because they can't afford travel almost doubled between October and December as the cost of living crisis is forcing many to change how they use health and care services.

[New Healthwatch England data](#) suggests people are increasingly avoiding prescriptions and travelling to NHS appointments due to spiralling costs.

Healthwatch England conducted a tracker poll with 2,000 adults in England between October and December 2022 to assess the impact of the cost of living on their health and wellbeing and whether it has affected how they use health and social care services.

The poll found that more people avoided getting prescription medicines, and booking NHS appointments, including dental treatment, due to the fear of extra costs, in December than in October.

- The number of people who avoided an NHS appointment due to the cost of travel almost doubled to more than one in 10 (11%, in December, up from 6% in October).
- Over one in 10 (11%) have avoided booking an NHS appointment because they couldn't afford the associated costs, such as accessing the internet or the cost of a phone call; up from 7% in October.
- 15% of respondents avoided going to a dentist because of the cost of checks-ups or treatment, up from 12% in October.
- One in 10 (10%) people have also avoided taking up one or more NHS prescriptions because of the cost, up from 6% in October.



- And one in 10 (10%) avoided buying over the counter medication they normally rely on, up from 7% in October.

More than a third of the respondents (39%) said the changes they have made to keep up with the rising cost of living have negatively affected their mental health, while 35% said their physical health had got worse in the last two months.

The findings also suggest women are more affected by spiralling costs compared to men and have taken more action to cut back on:

- Heating, which 42% of women have not turned on when they usually would, compared to 33% of men.
- Food, which 27% of women say they have bought less of, because of the increased cost, compared to 20% of men.
- Energy costs in general, with 33% of women saying they have turned off or avoided using essential appliances to save energy costs, compared to 25% of men.

[Read more about Healthwatch England's findings](#), and their recommendations for what the government and services can do, on our website.

You'll also find information on our website on [where to get cost of living support in Wiltshire](#).