

Specific cost of living support: this assessed whether respondents had used specific and targeted cost of living support. Participants found this overwhelmingly positive with satisfaction ratings of over 90% for free/low cost meals and activities in community buildings.

It was not uncommon for respondents to be unaware of services or think they did not qualify because they were employed. Others were ashamed to admit they were struggling or had negative experiences before so did not want to ask for support again. Many positive comments were made about the non-stigmatising support provided in communities.

Health and wellbeing: 86% reported stress-related feelings as a result of the cost of living. 73% reported low mood, 56% social isolation and 50% hopelessness. 71% were sleeping worse and almost half of those with pre-existing physical or mental health problems stated these had worsened. A similar proportion felt less able to carry out their job. Respondents commented on other impacts with some unable to afford special diets, dental treatment and non-prescribed medication.

Changes over the past 12 months: the survey explored whether there had been potentially positive changes such as more community spirit or active travel. A minority indicated changes with the exceptions of wasting less food and cutting down on things they didn't need.

Future support: the most commonly requested option was access to low-cost/free activities followed by support with health and wellbeing. Other suggestions included support to get into work, more face-to-face appointments, access to benefits, better housing, and increased support for homeowners.

CONCLUSIONS

- The majority of those who responded are struggling with cost of living
- Many are just keeping their heads above water and others are not making ends meet
- Ability to cope with life changes and escalating costs is likely to reduce
- People are cutting back significantly on social and leisure activities
- Some feel hopeless and are making difficult choices on how to spend limited finances
- There are significant impacts on health, wellbeing, and lifestyles
- Struggling financially is pervasive and a source of shame and stigma
- Services are a lifeline but do not meet the needs of everybody
- If the economic climate does not improve the need for support may increase

“My mental health has suffered greatly due to worrying constantly about having enough money for basic needs.”

“I am existing but not living.”

“I know I am not currently in crisis mode but this is unsustainable and I know it will eventually get to crisis mode. It just all feels so hopeless.”

This type of survey has limitations. People could choose whether to respond, some might have been excluded, and those who did participate may have been more affected by the cost of living. Whilst the information is useful, we cannot assume that all residents are facing the same challenges and conclusions cannot be made about specific services.

NEXT STEPS

The results of the Engage Dundee survey are being shared in a range of settings including with communities and respondents who left their contact details. Discussions and further analyses will help raise awareness, discuss possible actions, and agree priorities.

Published March 2024