



Health and the cost of living

Key messages from our polling, May 2023

healthwatch

Context

Over the last year, many charities and campaign groups have warned that millions of people are struggling with the cost of living crisis. We have heard from our Healthwatch network about the impact the rising cost of living is having on people.

To understand the scale and nature of this impact, especially the effect on people's health and their use of health and care services, we commissioned a nationally representative (of England) poll.

We have run this poll in four waves across winter to track the changing impact of the rising cost of living over time. We're using the findings to help inform health and care decision-makers about the steps they may need to take to improve support for people.

We focused our research on finding out the following:

- What impacts do people anticipate the rising cost of living having on them;
- What impacts are people already experiencing, including how they are changing their behaviour to cope with the rising cost of living; and
- If, and how, the rising cost of living affects how people interact with health and care services.

When is the polling taking place?

We have completed all four waves of our polling.

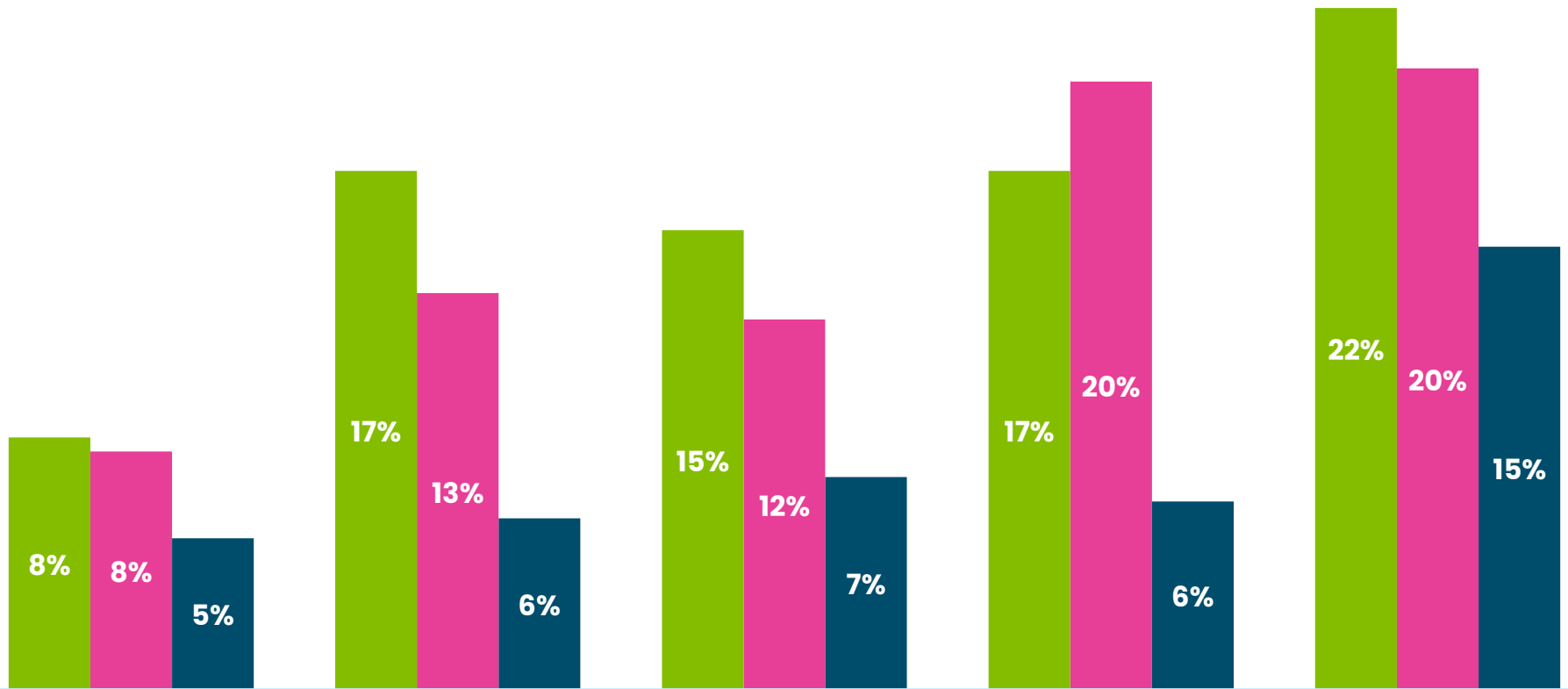
- Wave 1 ran 19 to 25 October
- Wave 2 ran 5 to 9 December
- Wave 3 ran 3 to 9 February
- Wave 4 ran 17 to 23 March

The following slides present wave 4 findings, broken down by age and those on disability- or means-tested benefits, on responses to the question:

'Thinking now specifically about your use of health and care services. Over the last month have you done any of the following?'

Figures for people on disability and means-tested benefits, wave 4

■ All ■ Means-tested benefits ■ Disability benefits



I have avoided taking up one or more NHS prescription because of the cost

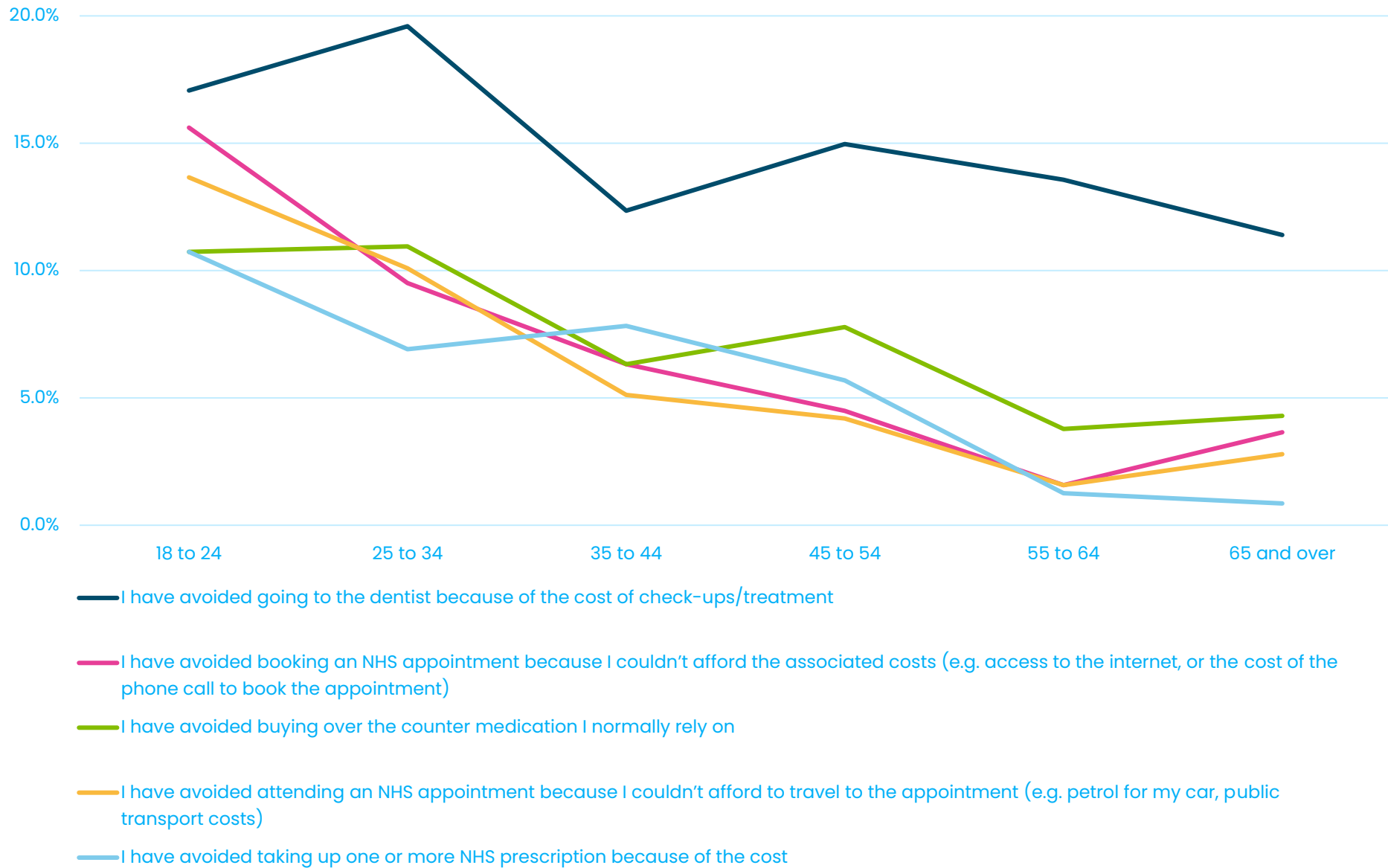
I have avoided attending an NHS appointment because I couldn't afford to travel to the appointment (e.g. petrol for my car, public transport costs)

I have avoided buying over the counter medication I normally rely on

I have avoided booking an NHS appointment because I couldn't afford the associated costs (e.g. access to the internet, or the cost of the phone call to book the appointment)

I have avoided going to the dentist because of the cost of check-ups/treatment

Wave 4, by age



	Whole sample	People on means-tested benefits	People on disability benefits	18 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65 and over
I have avoided going to the dentist because of the cost of check-ups/treatment	15%	20%	22%	17%	20%	12%	15%	14%	11%
I have avoided booking an NHS appointment because I couldn't afford the associated costs (e.g. access to the internet, or the cost of the phone call to book the appointment)	6%	20%	17%	16%	10%	6%	4%	2%	4%
I have avoided buying over the counter medication I normally rely on	7%	12%	15%	11%	11%	6%	8%	4%	4%
I have avoided attending an NHS appointment because I couldn't afford to travel to the appointment (e.g. petrol for my car, public transport costs)	6%	13%	17%	14%	10%	5%	4%	2%	3%
I have avoided taking up one or more NHS prescription because of the cost	5%	8%	8%	11%	7%	8%	6%	1%	1%

Full details of the question we asked to generate this data

Thinking now specifically about your use of health and care services. Over the last month have you done any of the following?

- I have avoided going to the dentist because of the cost of check-ups/treatment
- I have cut down on or stopped support on non-surgical private health services (e.g. physiotherapy, counselling)
- I have avoided booking an NHS appointment because I couldn't afford the associated costs (e.g. access to the internet, or the cost of the phone call to book the appointment)
- I have avoided attending an NHS appointment because I couldn't afford to travel to the appointment (e.g. petrol for my car, public transport costs)
- I have avoided seeking help from the NHS because I couldn't take time off work (e.g. because I was worried I would lose pay, or might be sacked)
- I have changed, cut down on or stopped support from paid for carers (e.g. people coming into my home to help me with preparing meals or washing and dressing)
- I have used a social care service that I would not have done otherwise, because of the cost of living
- I have avoided buying over the counter medication I normally rely on
- I have avoided taking up one or more NHS prescription because of the cost
- I have used a used a health service that I would not have done otherwise, because of the cost of living
- I have cut down on the use of medical equipment at home because of the running costs (e.g. ventilators, dialysis)
- None of these
- Prefer not to say

For more information

Healthwatch England
National Customer Service Centre
Citygate
Gallowgate
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 4PA

www.healthwatch.co.uk

t: 03000 683 000

e: enquiries@healthwatch.co.uk

 [@HealthwatchE](https://twitter.com/HealthwatchE)

 [Facebook.com/HealthwatchE](https://www.facebook.com/HealthwatchE)

healthwatch