



bytes

phf Paul Hamlyn
Foundation

Cost of Living

Views from Young People



boys & girls clubs
reach : involve : enjoy : achieve

ymca
ireland

YouthAction
NORTHERN IRELAND

include
YOUTH

Introduction



As a youth work charity focused on digital inclusion, Bytes focus on using digital platforms to engage young people. At Bytes, we have intentionally explored how to encourage digital participation. In 2020 we created a listening platform, currently called Positive Sparks, which was made possible through funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. On this platform young people can share their views using an open-text questionnaire. Since 2020 we have seen the benefits of using online platforms and social media platforms to effectively engage the views of young people.

In late 2022, we felt that we should use our skills to engage the voice of young people using these methods, to better understand their experiences of the cost of living crisis. Using these approaches we developed this research.

Methodology

We developed a survey which we shared across social media and our networks of young people. The survey was live between the 6th and 23rd of December 2022. In total 1,739 young people aged 11-25 responded to the survey.

The survey was available through our Positive Sparks website and asked young people:

- Are you worse off financially than at the start of summer 2022?
- If you are the bill payer in your household how worried are you about being able to pay?
- If you are not the bill payer how worried are you about your parents/guardians/partner paying your upcoming bills?
- Which rises in costs are you experiencing?
- Which of the following have you had to reduce spending on?
- Have you or your family used a Food Bank this year?
- Would you consider taking on extra work or another job to help cope with rising costs?

Once the survey results were available, we engaged groups of young people from the YMCA, Youth Action, Include Youth and Boys and Girls Clubs. We asked them to provide responses to each question and to reflect on the results. Their quotes are provided with each question.



Key Findings

Most respondents felt that at the end of 2022, they were financially worse off than during the Summer of 2022.

Those with responsibility for paying bills are worried or very worried about being able to pay. Those between 9-16 have a greater concern about the ability of a parent/guardian to pay bills.

Respondents felt that the greatest increase they are experiencing is in areas that improve their mobility (petrol/diesel/public transport).

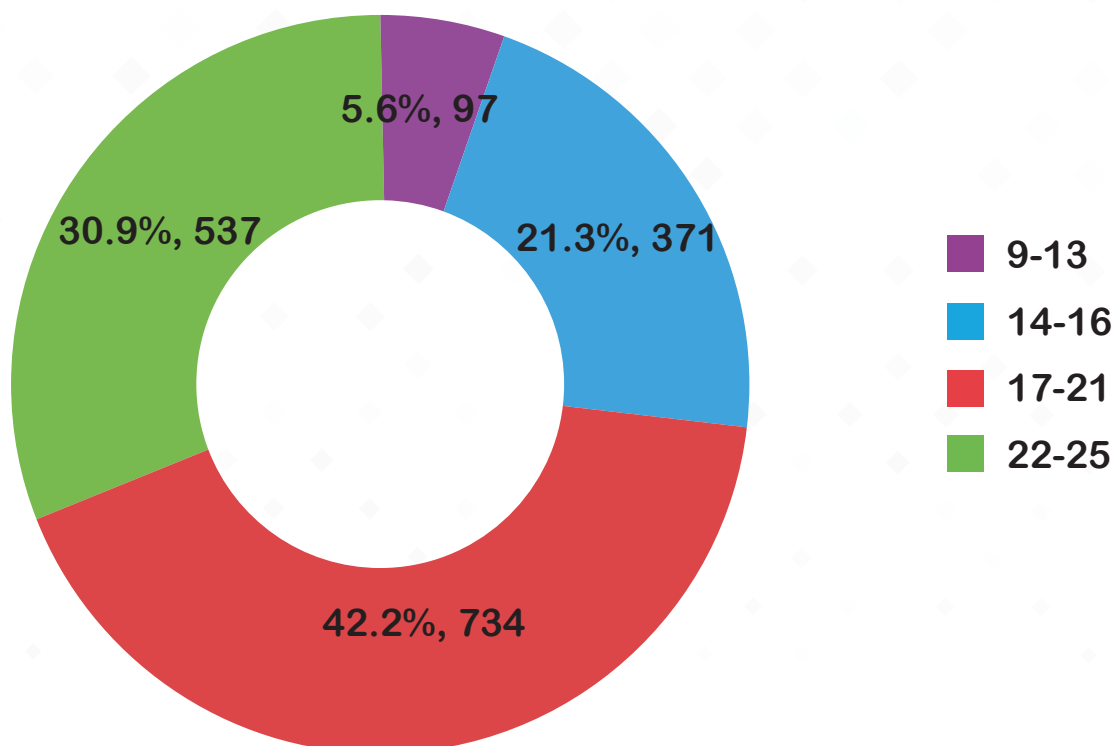
Those aged 14-25 said they are reducing spending on activities that support social engagement (leisure activities and memberships).

Almost 70% of respondents said they or their family has used a Food Bank.

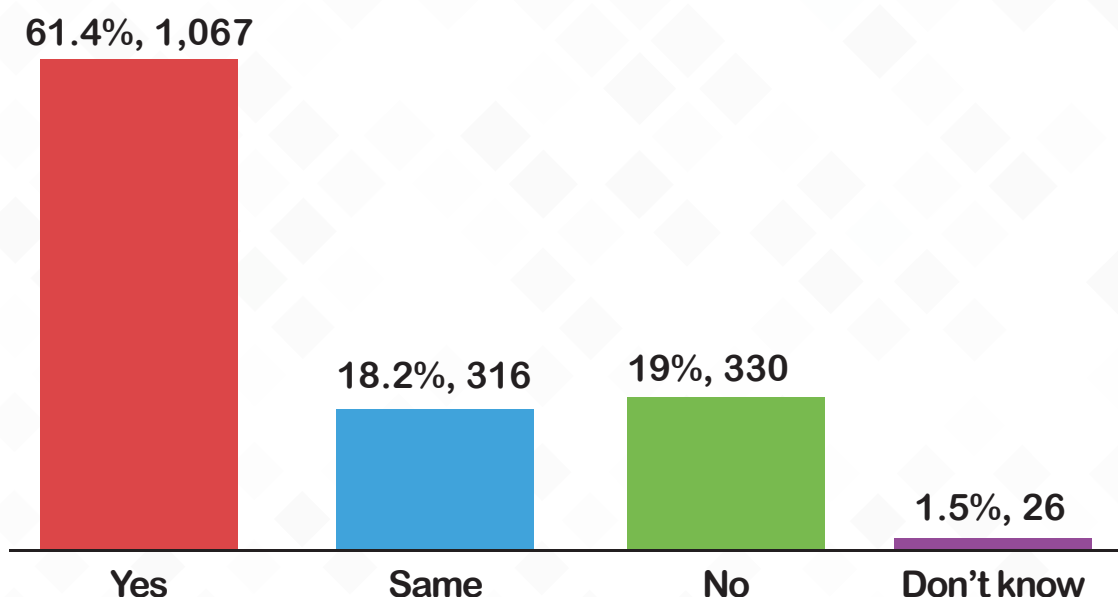
All respondents said they would consider taking on extra work or another job, with 10% of those aged 22-25 saying they already had taken on extra work.

Results

We asked all those who completed the survey to record their age group.



Are you worse off financially than at the start of summer 2022?



For those ages 9-13 32% said yes, 45% said the same and 21% said no. For those aged 14-16, 76% said yes, 11% said the same and 12% said no. For those ages 17-21 65% said yes, 13% said the same and 21% said no. For those aged 22-25, 51% said yes, 26% said the same and 20% said no.

For each age group, there are variations however, those aged 14 to 21, noted that they are worse off financially than at the start of the Summer of 2022.

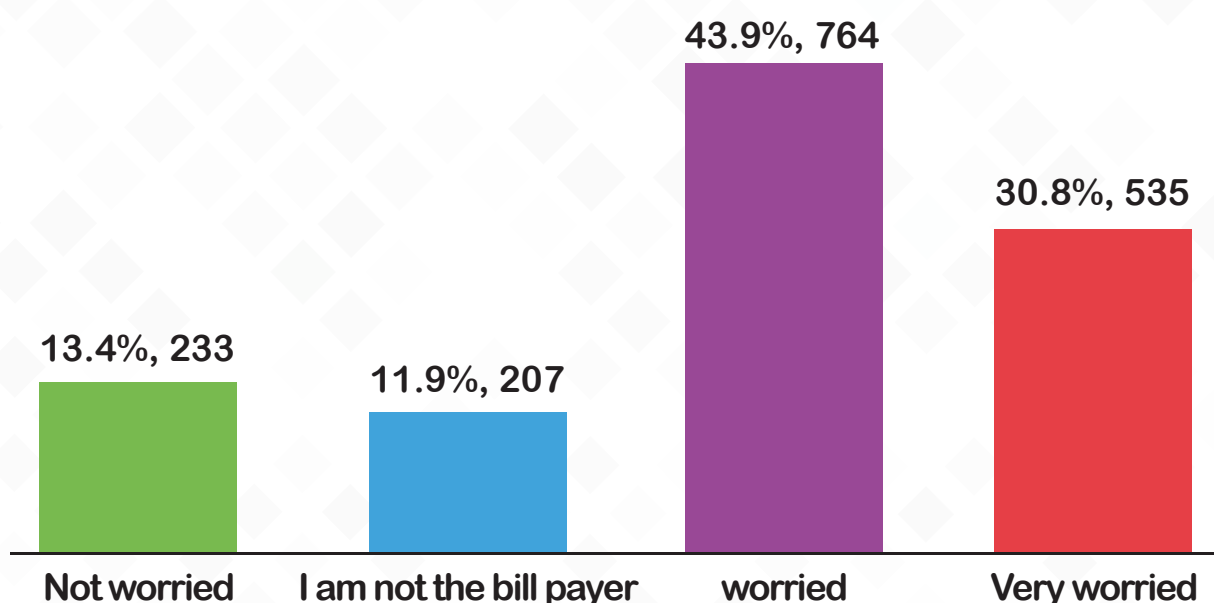
“We had no heating for over a week, the oil run out and we had to wait until the end of the month to get it – I hated it I didn’t feel clean or warm or anything. My nanny had to dry the uniforms, I was walking them down to her at night and picking them up again in the morning before school.”

“I get £60 every Friday which is supposed to cover £10 weekly bills and everything else. My money doesn’t even last until the following Wednesday. I can’t afford to go out with friends, and I live outside Belfast so travel is expensive”

“Minimum wage should be the same for all ages because it costs us as much to live as anyone else”



If you are the bill payer in your household how worried are you about being able to pay?



For those ages 9-13 10% said not worried, 54% said worried and 28% said very worried. For those aged 14-16 5% said not worried, 50% said worried and 29% said very worried. For those ages 17-21 10% said not worried, 47% said worried and 27% said very worried. For those aged 22-25 24% said not worried, 34% said worried and 38% said very worried.

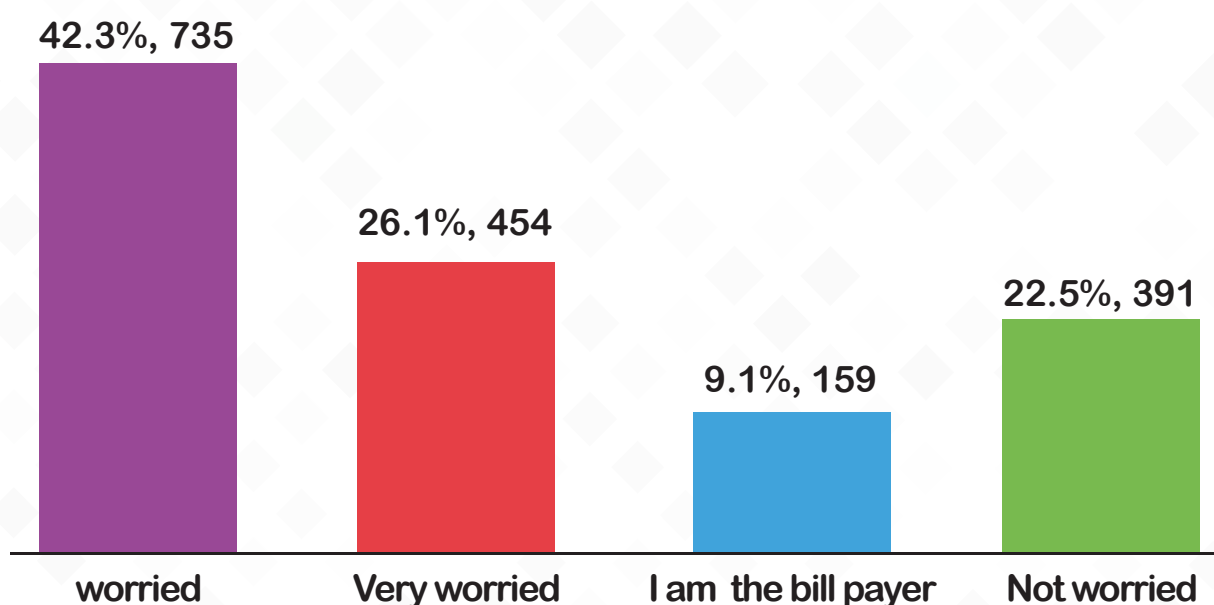
Those aged 9-21 said they were worried about being able to pay bills, with approximately 28% stating they were very worried. However, 38% of those aged 22-25 stated they were very worried.

“My ma runs about the house turning everything off after us – no more keeping the light on at the side of the bed at night. It does annoy me but it makes me think about what I am using too. I am thinking about it more.”

“I pay £10 towards bills every week out of the £69/week I receive to cover all my expenses. I can't afford to eat out or do very much with my friends and can't save any money”.



If you are not the bill payer how worried are you about your parents/guardians/partner paying your upcoming bills?



For those aged 9-16, there was an increase in the percentage of those worried about the capacity of their parent/guardian to pay their bills.

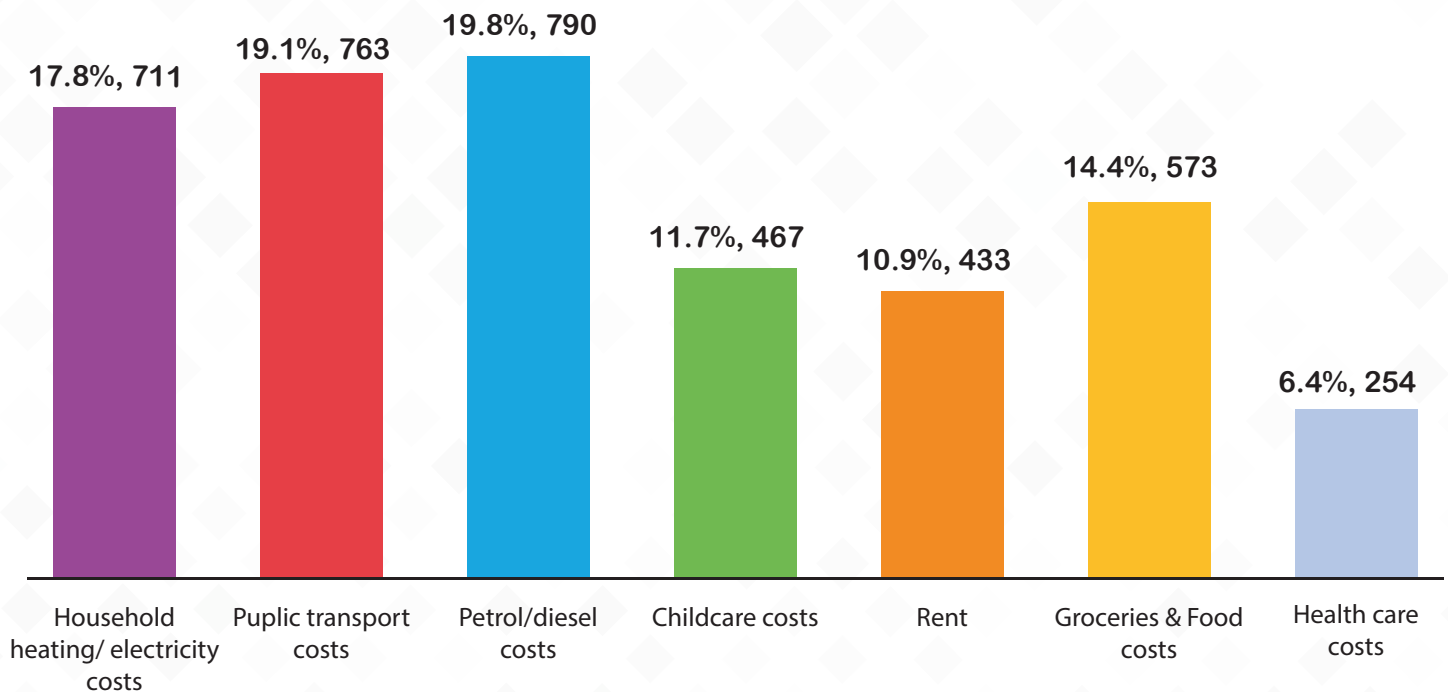
"My house is always cold and more and more we are all having to get cold showers."

"You defo see food prices or shopping has risen"

"I'm not really paying much at the minute, but I am very worried for my mummy. Like, they are paying for my phone and still giving me some money, but I know it's tough for her and it makes me feel guilty or something, but I am doing a-levels and the pay is so low for people my age, it's not even worse it".



Which rises in costs are you experiencing?



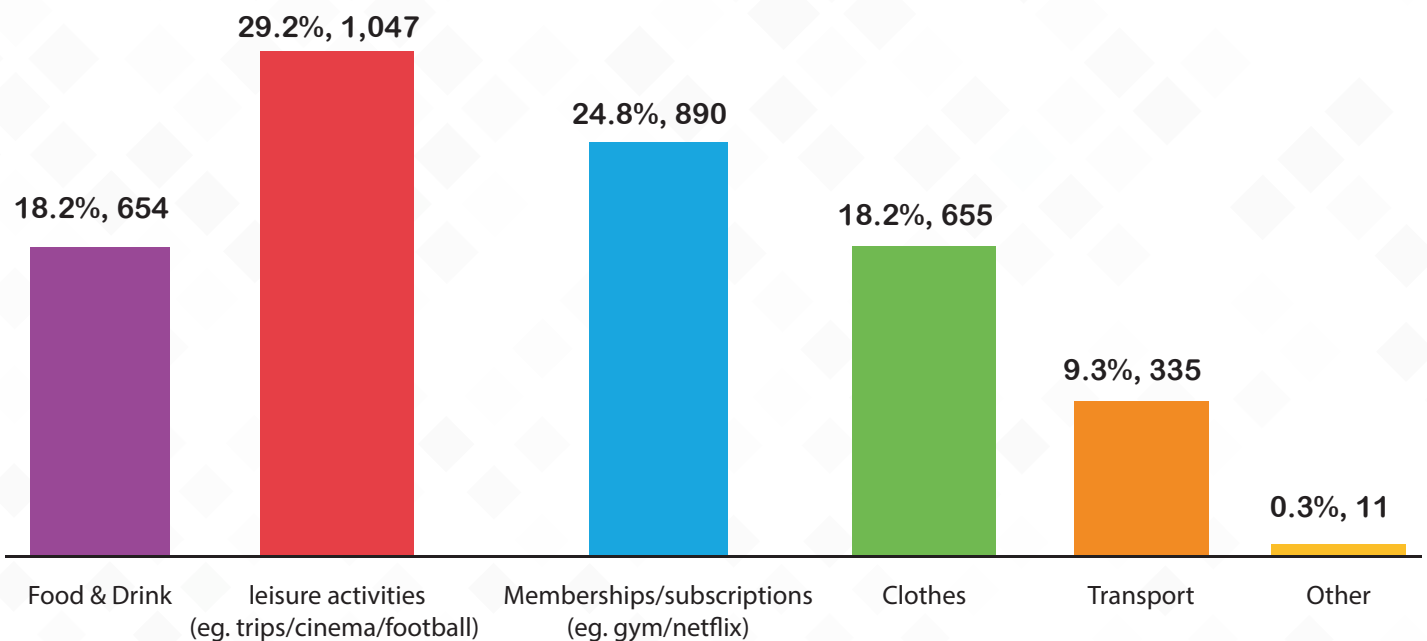
"I didn't ask for much this Christmas – I just knew my mum doesn't have it so I'm wearing the same gutties to school and outside."

"Anxious for my parent when I leave my phone charging all night by accident."

"I get £80/week to pay for food, electric, gas and clothes. I don't have enough money to buy clothes".

"Definitely food and diesel, I was never so happy to get a local placement so I can walk because I was really worried that if I had to travel I would need more money. I make packed lunches on a Sunday for the week ahead because the cost of food is crazy at the minute".

Which of the following have you had to reduce spending on?



For those ages 9-13 the reductions in spending they were experiencing were in clothes and transport. For those aged 14-25, the reductions are in leisure activities and membership subscriptions.

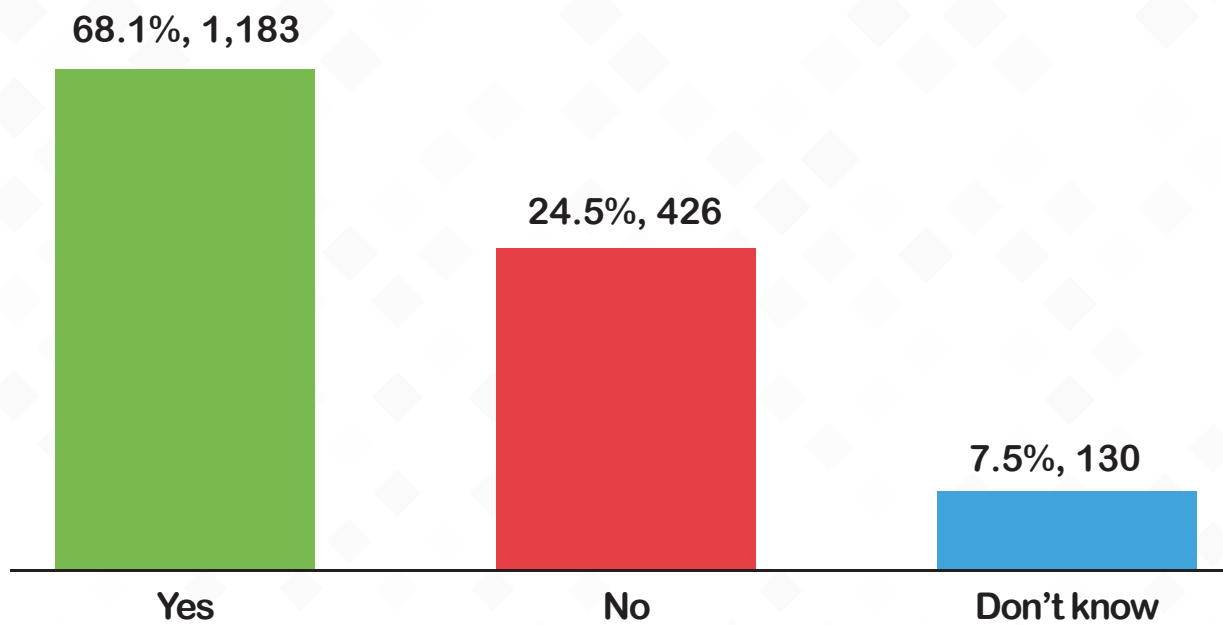
“Didn’t want to leave the house - no money for basics like the bus.”

“We love coming to the YM but we come more often because we can't afford to go to the gym or the cinema”.

“I also had to be really careful about going out, getting haircuts and I am using Vinted a bit more, so I am not buying new clothes at all”.



Have you or your family used a Food Bank this year?

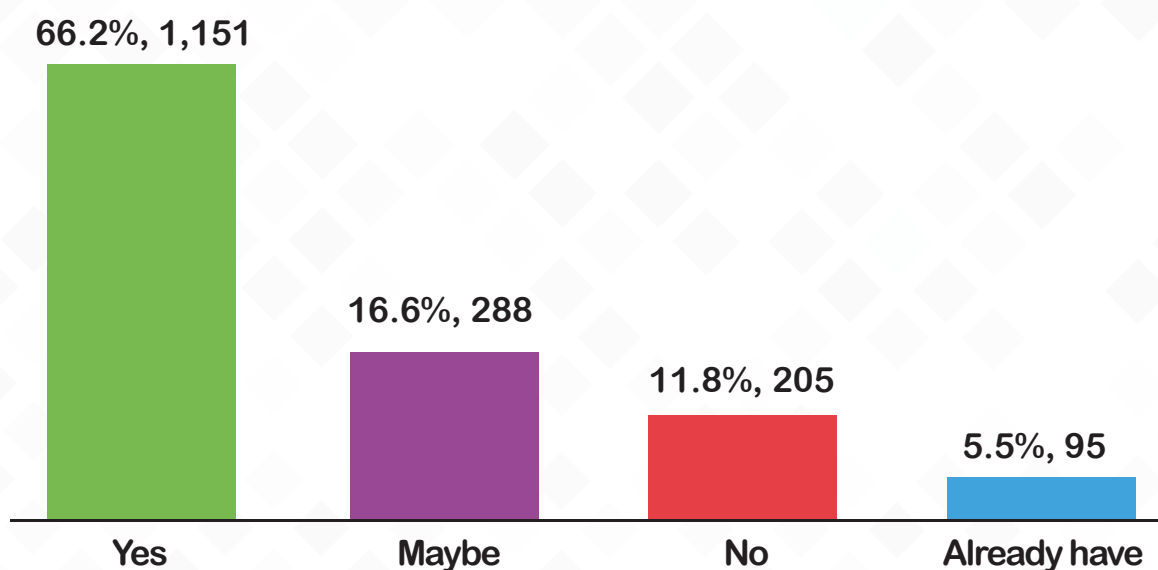


“I told the dole I had no money, they told me to go to the food bank.”

“We give stuff to the food bank because we know our friends need to use it”.



Would you consider taking on extra work or another job to help cope with rising costs?



For those aged 22-25, 10% said they had already taken on another job.

"I would see a lot of money lending going on between family members".

"I've taken on extra hours at the pizza shop to pay the bills".

"Last year I got through the year while working 7/8 hours in a local shop at home to give me enough to top up my loan but I have had to ask for more hours this year just so I can pay for my rent, food and travel".

"I want to move out with my friends and have some independence, but I genuinely can't afford to. I had to take a job behind a bar in my local GAA club to help my mum with costs, I am doing my teaching practice during the week, assignments during the day at the weekends and working at nights. It is tough but has to be done".

"It is hard to know like, I don't think my mummy or daddy would tell me, even if they were struggling. My da has taken up deliveries at the weekend but I never really thought about that much until now".

"I have like but see at the end of the day, what is the point like? People my age are working for less than £5. If I get a coffee and a chocolate bar, I am basically working an hour for free, like what is the point".



About the organisations that contributed to this research

This research was initiated by Bytes and enhanced with four members of the Youth Network NI.

The Youth Network NI is a collaborative group of regional youth work organisations that promote a collective approach to supporting the needs of children and young people. We currently have 26 members.

Across the network, we support hundreds of local youth work organisations and we have over 150 local EA-registered youth work organisations receiving support from the members of this network.

The Network has three priorities:

- Inform and shape policy for voluntary sector delivery.
- Champion the voice of children and young people and the voluntary sector.
- Sharing information across our network and wider membership.

If you want more information about the network contact any of the organisations listed within this research.

