



Organise members' recommendations ahead of the Spring Budget 2023

March 2023

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Organise is a network of workers from all sectors of the economy, supporting each other to get better pay, conditions and recognition at work.

This people-powered briefing outlines a number of policy recommendations put forward by Organise members, ranging from issues on energy bills to retirement. Its aim is to bring together a snapshot of the experiences, views, and voices of the British public who are calling on the government for support during the cost of living crisis.

The headlines:

94% of action takers think that the government should stop a planned £500 rise in annual energy bills from April

96% of action takers voted in favour of extending the cut to fuel duty

99% of action takers agree that the government should step in and force energy companies to reduce the standing charges on gas and electric

37,705 members signed the petition to lower the state pension age to 60

7,357 working parents signed the petition to make nurseries more affordable

45,719 members voted in favour of introducing free school meals for students!

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Energy bills and the cost of living crisis

Do you think the government should stop a planned £500 rise in annual energy bills from April? [1]

Votes: 56,718

Do you think the government should stop a planned £500 rise in annual energy bills from April?



56718 votes • Thank you for voting!

What members are saying:

It's just not fair at a time when so many are struggling yet billions in profits are being made by energy companies.

My son has neurosarcoidosis, and we have to regulate his body temperature externally, as his pituitary gland is damaged, we do not have a choice, the energy companies are making obscene profits, yet elderly people are freezing to death, why are prices going up when wholesale prices have come down?

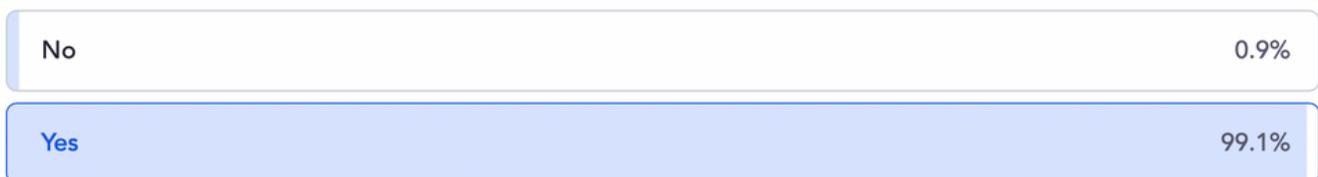
The Government is blaming the Ukraine war for the increase in energy prices. So why is the rest of Europe not suffering these increases?

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Do you think the government should step in and force energy companies to reduce the standing charges on gas and electric by at least 50%? [2]

Votes: 30,491

Do you think the government should step in and force energy companies to reduce the standing charges on gas and electric by at least 50%



30491 votes • Thank you for voting!

What members are saying:

These charges are exorbitant considering how much money these companies make in published profits.

Our winter energy bills are only £50 less than our rent! (2-bed flat) And we've cut down a lot on heating and been cold for weeks. We are both working and struggling. The £60 a month the government have given us doesn't make a tiny dent in the extortionate prices we are paying.

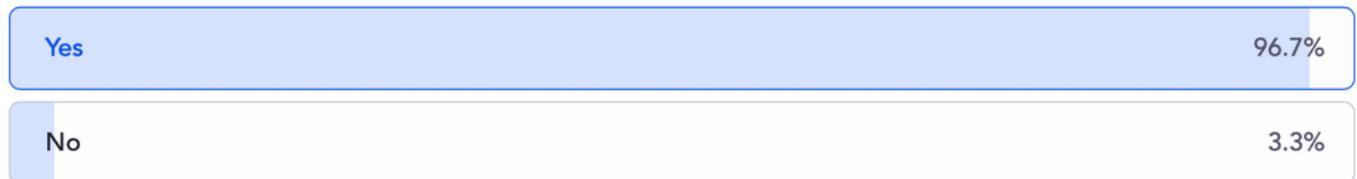
There is no justification for increasing standing charges - it hits the poorest in society. They should be reduced to what they were 2 years ago.

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Do you think the 5p cut to fuel duty should be extended past the end of March? [3]

Votes: 5,357

Do you think the 5p cut to fuel duty should be extended past the end of March?



5357 votes • Thank you for voting!

What members are saying:

It would be great to use public transport, but there is no real public transport like in other parts of Europe, look at the recent price increases to rail fares!

It's already ridiculous how much we pay in tax in fuel, a much bigger cut is needed.

Oil companies have made record profits - cut and cap prices and enforce windfall taxes to support public services with pay rises through the cost of living crisis for which they are partly responsible.

The number of times I have been charged for driving through cities, there is no way that tax should go up. There is no viable alternative if you need to use a car and not everyone can afford electric.

Keep the £400 energy support scheme for those on low income! [4]

7,549 signatures

Petition text:

Under the Treasury's current plans, household energy bills are set to jump from £2,500 to £3,000 in April. The Government should be protecting us from rising bills, not scrapping the support!

What members are saying:

I can't afford electric or gas, I'm going without food so my children can eat and I can put £10 on the electric. Even with lights, TV, fridge and freezer off with limited washing, it only lasts 2 days. I honestly do not know what I'm going to do when the help stops. I'm a carer for a family member on Universal Credit and my rent is going up. I'm tired of worrying and struggling.

I can only get a minimum wage part-time job since being made redundant at the age of 62 during the pandemic. I only have this and a small amount of savings to live on while my wife cares for her parents full-time. We need help!

Families are struggling. There are too many children already living in poverty. Energy companies are immoral with the profits they are pocketing on the backs of these children.

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£35 extra a week should go on benefits or make a basic universal income to cover living expenses. [5]

3,989 signatures

Petition text:

People on benefits need £35 extra a week to cover living expenses. I ask the government to put up the benefits by this much. Several charities have done studies and found out that that is how much more people on benefits need. If you are an asylum seeker I expect the raise should be in line with other benefits. Not less.

What members are saying:

It should be a universal basic income in all honesty. I've worked out that I'm not even on the poverty line according to Trust for London, I'm below it with my two kids. Being disabled makes work harder but I still try. There should be an easier way to gain additional help if needed on top of simply having enough to exist.

I am a single parent and all my bills have gone up, in fact everything has gone up and food is at a high right now. So obviously we need a little more to help with all these things and put food on the table to feed my children.

Unemployed people deserve as much dignity as anyone else.

Childcare affordability and the Early Years Sector

Affordable State Nurseries in the UK [6]

7,357 signatures

Petition text:

We have the second most expensive childcare system in the world and many families in the UK are struggling to pay. With the cost of living crisis and the impact of covid, this problem is only going to get worse.

The state already provides free education for 5+ year olds and this should be extended to nurseries too. State nurseries would mean affordable and inclusive childcare for all families.

What members are saying:

Working versus having a family shouldn't be a choice, especially in one of the wealthiest countries in the world. Childcare is a basic necessity and supports more equitable working conditions.

My daughter cannot afford childcare as she works part-time as a teacher. More and more grandparents have to provide childcare. Early years education is vital for a productive workforce. Free nurseries from age 2 should be provided.

Introduce a universal childcare guarantee now! [7]

6,893 signatures

Petition text:

The UK has a childcare crisis. Too many parents cannot afford basic childcare and are faced with an impossible choice: pay for childcare or quit their job. A universal childcare guarantee includes measures from free childcare for under-twos to more funding for after-school clubs. It means affordable and accessible childcare that millions of parents desperately need.

What members are saying:

I work part-time. My take-home monthly salary is £100 after I pay 2 half days of childcare per week. I basically can't afford to work.

Struggling to afford childcare and work at the same time. Childcare costs almost as much as my entire salary so considering leaving my job to look after my child.

It makes sense to provide affordable child care - for the children, the parents - particularly the mother and the UK economy.

There are so many families where both parents need to work to just live but a chunk of their wages go on childcare which is unacceptable.

Stop children going hungry at school! [8]

45,719 signatures

Petition text:

I want lunchtime supervisors empowered to give a meal at the point of service, regardless of whether the child can afford it. I want every child to get a meal at school and it to be funded by the Government. The cost of this policy proposal is minute compared to other government expenditures like cutting the top rate of tax. No child should have to go hungry.

What members are saying:

I have seen first hand due to my position at work, many young people don't even have breakfast or a substantial meal on a daily basis which in turn affects their learning and behaviour without them even realising! Families are struggling daily with paying their utility bills so every little bit of support provided will help people's lives and their well being. It's a tough world out there and it's becoming tougher for survival.

Just because your family are not entitled to free school meals doesn't mean they can afford lunch every day. Islington provide free school meals for all children at primary school age this should be the same in all boroughs and all ages.

Pensions and retirement

The retirement age should be lowered to 60! [9]

37,705 signatures

Petition text:

I would like the retirement age set back to 60. I've heard of many people just reaching retirement, or soon after, and having a stroke.

There are many children coming up through college, studying for their dream job, only to find there are no jobs. If we could retire at a reasonable age of 60 then it would open the workforce to the new generation. It would also keep jobs from taking their toll on the elderly.

What members are saying:

If the retirement age is lowered, this would lead to a healthier retirement for most, thus saving millions of pounds with the NHS, also if you free up jobs, surely that helps with getting young people into work, which in turn would help them start pension saving much earlier, and lower the general unemployment level!

Cost of living, austerity, fuel poverty and lack of investment in the NHS is driving down life expectancy for ordinary people and therefore the retirement age is too high.

Pensioners' tax allowance should be increased! [10]

15,696 signatures

Petition text:

More and more pensioners are having to pay tax on pensions.

Government should increase all pensioners' taxable threshold to £15,000!

What members are saying:

As a pensioner myself, I'm caught in a total poverty trap. An increase in the tax allowance would be the most equitable solution. Some years ago, there was a differential in the basic tax allowance and pensioners did attract a slightly better rate. This disappeared and everyone then had the same basic rate. Unfortunately, this one size fits all approach does not fit everyone and discriminated against those who are of pensionable age.

As a pension provides only a very limited income, and for many pensioners supplementing that income with work is not achievable. Therefore keeping more of the income (pension) to be able to live, means that less tax should need to be paid. Particularly for those on much less than average UK incomes.

After a lifetime of work and paying taxes, pensioners deserve a higher tax-free allowance.

Do you think the state pension age should rise? [11]

Votes: 17,151

Do you think the state pension age should rise?



17151 votes • Thank you for voting!

What members are saying:

Many, women in particular, have already had 7 years added without enough time/income to prepare.

I am 62 and still working full-time. I should've been able to retire at 60 but now have to work until I'm 67! I have Rheumatoid Arthritis and Osteoarthritis and working is killing me!

I was cheated out of six years despite serious illness and worked from home until my 66th birthday. If people are fit and well and want to carry on working that should be a personal choice not compulsory.

Everyone deserves to retire with some sort of expectation of a few years of rest and enjoyment. Too many people die before they get to retirement age already.

Thank you for taking the time to read this report.

These quotations have been anonymously shared by people in the Organise Network.

To respond to this report, please contact Roxana Khan-Williams at roxana@organise.network

Notes:

[1] *Organise Snap Poll: Do you think the government should stop a planned £500 rise in annual energy bills from April?*

<https://organise.network/dashboard/poll-do-you-think-the-government-should--8KSHdrWD>

[2] *Organise snap poll: Do you think the government should step in and force energy companies to reduce the standing charges on gas and electric by at least 50%?*

https://organise.network/dashboard/poll-do-you-think-the-government-should--tBeykl_W



[3] Organise snap poll: Do you think the 5p cut to fuel duty should be extended past the end of March?

<https://organise.network/dashboard/poll-do-you-think-the-5p-cut-to-fuel-dut-jvovcSB4>

[4] Organise petition: Keep the £400 energy support scheme for those on low income!

<https://the.organise.network/campaigns/network-keep-the-400-energy-support-scheme-for-those-on-low-income-ff5d5b27ae9a2fdd>

[5] Organise petition: £35 extra a week should go on benefits or make a basic universal income to cover living expenses.

<https://the.organise.network/campaigns/3478>

[6] Organise petition: Affordable State Nurseries in the UK

<https://the.organise.network/campaigns/network-affordable-state-nurseries-in-all-boroughs-ddb50bf8fda40bff>

[7] Organise petition: Introduce a universal childcare guarantee now!

<https://the.organise.network/campaigns/universal-childcare-guarantee>

[8] Organise petition: Stop children going hungry at school!

<https://the.organise.network/campaigns/network-every-child-gets-a-meal-at-school-never-refused-by-the-lunchtime-supervisor-9d7a67a8cc2f915a>



[9] Organise petition: The retirement age should be lowered to 60!
<https://the.organise.network/campaigns/network-retirement-age-should-be-lowered-934834059ac6fb35>

[10] Organise petition: Pensioners' tax allowance should be increased!
<https://the.organise.network/campaigns/network-pensioners-tax-allowance-should-be-increased-a227f5dbeb79256b>

[11] Organise snap poll: Do you think the state pension age should rise?
<https://organise.network/dashboard/poll-do-you-think-the-state-pension-age--YgoLsLbr>

