Gen Alpha's perspective on the

Cost of Living Crisis

HOOK

November 2022

State of play: Recent research starkly shows that rising energy costs and inflation are worrying adults (particularly parents) around the country:

51% …of UK adults claim to be worried about rising costs of food *Opinium, Nov 2022*

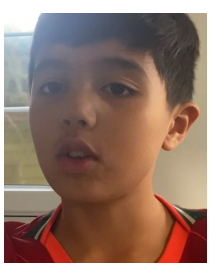
2/3 …of UK parents are worried about rising costs of food and fuel *Nesta, Aug 2022*

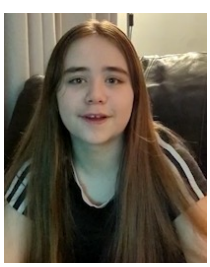
What we did: To help flesh out these worries a bit more clearly, and also understand younger kids' perceptions of the Crisis – something often missing from reporting into the topic – Hook recruited 8 x children and their parents (who were currently worried about the Cost of Living Crisis) to explore their thoughts on the Crisis and how it was impacting their day-to-day lives.*

All children aged 7-13	2 x UK Areas: South England & Scotland	SEG BC1C2D & 50% POC	Mix of Nuclear & Non-Nuclear Households	All parents to be 'worried' about the Crisis, and to be making changes in the home

How we did it: When dealing with topics that may bring anxiety to young people, researchers need to be particularly careful. We designed our research with the aim of first prioritising the mental health and happiness of our young respondents. We did this in a few ways:

- **We framed the research in happier subjects** – first asking young people to talk about the things they love doing and are most looking forward to over the next year, before diving into other topics.
- **We created a distancing model for responses**, where young people could first talk about 'their friends' worries rather than their own. Further questioning enabled us to identify where their own worries overlapped with those of their peers. We also sense-checked our understanding of individual kids' worries with their parents.
- **All responses were captured via video** to give younger individuals the most flexibility in how they talk about the subject, and not having to rely on written ability (particularly at the younger end of the spectrum).





Summary: While most young people we spoke with were aware of the Cost of Living Crisis, they don't feel like it is currently having a massive impact on their lives – even in households where parents are taking active measures to make savings.

Worried parents, on the other hand, are anticipating dark days ahead – and are starting to make small and large changes in the household that (they hope) will keep them afloat in the months and maybe years to come. Talking about the issue with their children is tricky: they are happy that their children aren't currently worrying about the Crisis – as this "isn't something for them to worry about" – but are also keen to loop them into the savings process.

The kids we spoke with were aware of the term 'Cost of Living Crisis' and generally had a pretty clear understanding of what has caused it – though, when pressed, they often weren't too sure on the particular mechanisms inflating costs:

- The war between Ukraine and Russia is most cited as the reasons for rising costs
- Covid-19 is understood to play some kind of role as well
- Many also blame the Tory government – with Liz Truss name-checked multiple times

Parents and School are their two biggest sources of information about the Crisis – in school, many talked about how Newsround was hugely helpful for understanding the topic.

"We watch about [the Cost of Living] at school… we watch it on Newsround"
– Girl, 8, Scotland

"I've heard about it when mummy and daddy talk about it [at home]"
– Girl, 7, Scotland

On the whole, however, most young people in our research claim that they (and their friends) aren't worried about the Crisis – at most, they see it as adding minor inconveniences to their lives

"It's not something me and my friends are worrying about… people my age worry about their phone dying when they're out"
– Boy, 13, South England

"I think [the Cost of Living Crisis] means that Daddy won't turn on the central heating"
- Girl, 7, South England

"I don't feel anything for it, I don't really care… I don't think anything about it because it's not my problem"
– Girl, 12, South England

Little changes in the home add up. Parents in our research spoke about a range of changes they have made in the home to combat the rising costs of energy and food:

Changing where they shop
Many spoke about changing to Aldi and Lidl from Sainsburys and Tesco

Not turning on heating
As chillier nights descend, this was the most visible change to many children

Fewer treats
Treats such as desserts and weekend takeaways are becoming more rare

Using the car less
As fuel costs increase, little trips around town in the family car are being axed

Turning off lights & sockets
Everyone talked about little changes they could make in the house to save energy

Better budgeting
Parents in our study claimed to spend more time budgeting than in the past

Changing & Adding Jobs
Some parents have started to pickup extra hours, or – in some cases – second jobs. Others have changed roles to ensure better income down the road.

"We have four children… just to make those cut-backs on food prices and energy bills as much as we can, that's hugely important"
– Parent of Girl, 7, South England

"Just energy. Do. Not. Waste. Anything! Anything! All my kids have got hot blankets on the beds – if they get cold, they'll go into hot blankets or take the hot blanket round with them"
– Parent of Girl, 7, Scotland

When it comes to their children's lives specifically, parents are making some additional changes

Buying fewer school lunches

Smaller Christmases

Fewer Clubs & School Trips

Parents taking on second jobs are also worried that they will have less time to spend with kids moving forward

"I saw that we had to ask her to do her violin lessons… so we sat down and I said, we can't afford to be doing lessons for things you're not interested in anymore. So we've stopped doing the violin"
– Parent of Girl, 12, South England

"There has to be cuts. They have to choose one club over another."
– Parent of Girl, 8, Scotland

Parents are eager to involve their kids in cost-saving activities associated with the Crisis…

"I think it's important that they are involved in this process [of saving]. I'm always shouting at them to turn off lights and things"
– Parent of Girl, 7, Scotland

"We try to shield the children, but we want them to be realists and I want them to have some kid of awareness… we just want her to be conscious not to waste things"
– Parent of Girl, 12, South England

…but parents also don't want to worry their kids unnecessarily about the issue

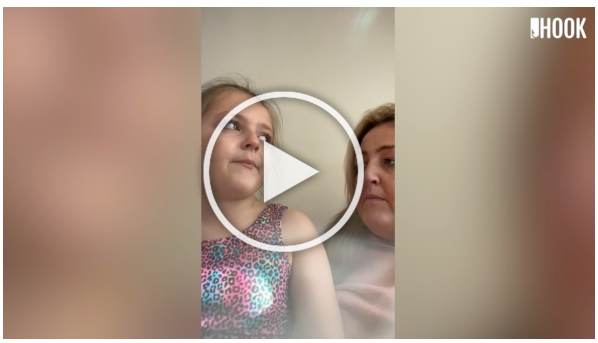
"We do talk about the Cost of Living crisis with our children, to an extent. We wouldn't want them to worry too much"
– Parent of Boy, 8, South England

"I don't really talk to my children about the Cost of Living Crisis, because I don't think it's a burden that they are needing to carry and I'm trying to reassure them that we're OK and will make ends meet"
– Parent of Girl, 11, Scotland

Regardless, some parents we spoke with feel their kids (particularly the slightly older ones) realise that they have some anxieties about the future

"We have two older boys and two younger girls, and I think our boys are aware. I think when they go to the supermarket they see how much our family shopping is costing and they're shocked"
– Parent of Girl, 7, South England

"Yes, he does know that we're worried about the Crisis to a certain degree"
– Parent of Boy, 12, South England



Want to learn a bit more about Gen Alpha's perspective on the Crisis?
Take a look at our video about the Cost of Living crisis in 2022.

And if you have any questions at all about this research please get in touch:
enquiries@hookresearch.co.uk