



Both main parties are out of step with public on cost of living, as fewer than one in four think crisis is a priority for the Conservatives or Labour

Key swing voters say policies to tackle the cost of living crisis are critical to their voting intentions in the next election, a new study has found, but neither major party has the confidence of voters on the issue.

The report [1], which has been produced by the steering committee of the Stop the Squeeze coalition based on research from YouGov, finds that the cost of living crisis is the number two issue determining how people will vote at the next election, with 50% of all voters choosing it as a priority issue, just behind the NHS.

However a significantly lower number of voters think it is a priority for either of the main parties. Only 21% and 23% of voters believe the cost of living crisis to be a priority for the Conservatives and Labour respectively.

Almost half of key swing voters (47%) do not know what the political priorities of the Labour Party are.

While more voters think Labour would do a better job than the Conservatives of tackling the cost of living crisis (40% vs 21%), three quarters of those who back Labour on this issue say they do not know what the party plans to do about it if elected.

Overall, the research finds that both parties will need to do significantly more to reassure voters that tackling the cost of living crisis is a priority for them and they have a clear plan on how to do so.

The findings also indicate that if Labour were to put forward bolder policy solutions on the cost of living, this could help the party win over key swing voters like 'Stevenage Woman' in the run up to the next election, and that when it comes to policies to address the crisis the public prioritises support with energy bills, housing costs, and the minimum wage over cutting income tax. When asked how additional cost of living support should be funded, the public overwhelmingly favour increasing taxes on those with high levels of wealth and income, over other funding options.



The polling was commissioned by the steering group of the Stop the Squeeze campaign (Economic Change Unit, Tax Justice UK and the New Economics Foundation). The Stop the Squeeze campaign is a coalition of 50 organisations who are calling for bolder solutions to the cost of living crisis.

Sam Tims, senior economist at the New Economics Foundation (NEF) said:

"Ahead of the next election voters' priorities are clear: they want politicians to offer up bold solutions to tackle the cost of living crisis. Energy bills, housing costs and wages will be at the forefront of people's minds. There is a golden opportunity for any political party that can offer voters both a short term-plan to support people through the cost of living crisis and the long-term change we need to improve living standards for good."

Simon Francis, Co-ordinator, End Fuel Poverty Coalition

"The public are sending a clear message to politicians. They want to see real action on the cost of living crisis. As we head towards winter, prices for essentials remain at all time highs and even if the Government gets inflation under control, people will be stuck paying more for necessities. The next Government will need to ensure we have a long term strategy for tackling energy bills, based around a reformed energy grid that passes on the cost of cheaper renewables to the public and which helps people afford vital energy saving measures such as insulation."

Rachael Henry, Head of Advocacy and Policy, Tax Justice UK

"The public are ahead of the politicians. They want common sense solutions. That's why public support for fairer taxes on wealth is overwhelming. People know that while they struggle to afford their food shopping and electricity bills there are astronomically wealthy people that could be asked to contribute more. It's high time our politicians caught up."

"Tax cuts aren't the answer to the cost of living crisis, and the public know it. It is astounding that the government is rumoured to be considering tax cuts for the well-off. People want real solutions to solve the very real problems they face - not policies cooked up to appease party political issues."

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Notes to editors:

1.

Key findings include:

- Nearly half (45%) of key swing voter demographic 'Stevenage Woman' (identified by Labour Together as the group that Labour must win over to consolidate their lead over the Conservatives) say that the cost of living crisis will be one of the most important issues in deciding how they will vote at the next general election.
- While cost of living is a priority issue for most voters (50%), a significantly lower number of voters think it is a priority for either of the main parties. Only 21% and 23% of voters believe the cost of living crisis to be a priority for the Conservatives and Labour respectively.
- 39% of key swing voters do not know what the Conservatives' current political priorities are while 47% do not know the current priorities of the Labour Party.
- Labour have a 19 point lead (40% vs 21%) on which party would be best to tackle the cost of living crisis, but three in four voters who prefer Labour on this issue say they don't have a good idea of what the party would actually do. In addition, only one in ten (11%) Conservative 2019 voters rate Labour higher on the cost of living, with more than three times as many (37%) not choosing either party.
- Labour could be doing much more to win voters in swing seats. Voters respond well to Labour's message on restoring economic security, but today's polling suggests that if the party put forward bolder solutions (boosting the minimum wage and social security, investing in cheap clean energy, and taxing the super rich) to the crisis, then it could gain them more votes among the key 'Stevenage Woman' demographic. Adding bolder policy ideas to a Labour message resulted in a 4pt swing to Labour among the core target segments, including a 13-point swing for the Stevenage Woman demographic compared to a generic Labour cost of living message.



- When asked what solutions they would like to see to help with the cost of living, voters opted for policies which cut the price of energy, raised the minimum wage and reduced housing costs. Fewer voters preferred tax cutting policies. Members of the 'Workington Man' demographic - another group of voters identified as key to winning the next general election - were over three times more likely to opt for policies that bring down energy prices rather than policies that cut taxes. 'Stevenage Woman' voters were twice as likely to opt for cheaper energy over lower taxes.

2. This polling drew on a segmentation model developed by YouGov with the think tank Labour Together.

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2,000 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 25th - 26th July 2023. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

3. Stop the Squeeze is a coalition campaign calling on the government to tackle the cost of living crisis by guaranteeing affordable energy, boosting incomes, and raising taxes on wealth. The full list of supporting organisations can be found at www.stopthesqueeze.uk

Supporter organisations have signed up to support the campaign launch statement and the demands of the campaign, they do not necessarily support every policy proposal that may be mentioned by the campaign.

Stop the Squeeze has been formed by a core steering group consisting of [The Economic Change Unit](#), the [New Economics Foundation](#), and [Tax Justice UK](#).

A range of spokespeople are available from organisations supporting Stop the Squeeze.