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New research shows cost of living policies are key to winning the next election

Ahead of the Spring Budget, Stop the Squeeze, a leading coalition of NGOs, trade unions and civil society organisations, analysed data on voter priorities in [Labour's 150 target seats](#) to win the next election and found that the cost of living is the top issue for voters in 92% of these seats.

When asked to rank three issues that would most affect their voting intentions, voters in 138 of the 150 seats on Labour's target list of seats overwhelmingly choose the cost of living as their key priority. The NHS is the other big issue driving voting intention in these seats and was the key priority in nine of the target seats. In three of the seats, the NHS and cost of living concerns were tied.

The findings come as Chancellor Jeremy Hunt appeared to rule out further cost of living support in the upcoming Budget, telling the BBC last week that the government "[won't be able to relieve pressure on families](#)" until the 2% inflation target is met.

The data, collated by [Lodestone Communications' Election Hub](#) reinforces Stop the Squeeze's findings from in their The [Bottom Line report](#) last year which found that both main political parties are out of step with the public on cost of living. The report found that fewer than one in four voters believe the crisis is a priority for the Conservatives or Labour and that policies to tackle the cost of living crisis are critical to the voting intentions of key swing voters.

Stop the Squeeze has challenged Jeremy Hunt's assertion that the UK economy has "turned a corner" and the government's "plan is working", arguing that this does not reflect the reality of millions of people up and down the country who continue to struggle financially. With the general election mere months away, Stop the Squeeze's research is clear; politicians who can demonstrate they understand the pain the crisis is causing and offer real, substantive policy solutions, not just inadequate, short-term sticking plasters, are likely to win at the polls.

On Friday, Stop the Squeeze submitted a letter to the Chancellor signed by a group of 90 leading charities, trade unions and civil society organisations, including Unison, Oxfam, Friends of the Earth and Christians Against Poverty calling on government to use this last fiscal moment before the general election to tackle the cost of living crisis and extend measures to support those who need it.

Megan Davies from Stop the Squeeze said,

“This Budget is the last significant opportunity the government has ahead of the general election to make a real difference to people's lives on the cost of living crisis. The cost of living may be slipping off the radar of politicians, but for the public this is clearly a cost of living election. This research is clear; it is time for politicians to listen to what really matters to voters and to take bold action on the cost of living.”

Tom Pollard, Head of Social Policy at the New Economics Foundation said

“Instead of gambling the future of our public services to offer further tax cuts, the government needs to take urgent action to guarantee that essentials such as energy, food, and decent housing remain affordable for all. The social security system should guarantee that no household can fall below a level of income that allows them to afford these essentials. Alongside this, high-quality, well-funded public services are vital to help people stay well and meet their wider needs.”

Regional breakdown

Breaking down voter priorities into regions, Stop the Squeeze found that:

- 26 of **Scotland's** 57 constituencies are target seats. Of those seats the cost of living is the key concern of voters in 25 of them. In the remaining seat, the NHS polled higher.
- 18 of **Yorkshire's** 54 constituencies are target seats. Of those, the cost of living is the key concern of voters in 16 of them. In the remaining target seats, the NHS polled higher in one seat and the NHS and cost of living were tied in another seat.
- 11 of **Wales'** 32 constituencies are target seats. Of those, the cost of living is the key concern of voters in seven of them. The NHS polled higher in the remaining four target seats.
- 13 of the **North East's** 29 constituencies are target seats. Of those, the cost of living is the key concern of voters' in 12 of them. In the remaining seat, the NHS polled the same as cost of living for voters' concerns.
- 16 of the **North West's** 75 constituencies are target seats. In all 16 of them the cost of living is the key concern of voters.
- 13 of the **West Midlands'** 59 constituencies are target seats. In 12 of those seats, the cost of living is the key concern of voters. In the remaining target seat, the NHS polled slightly higher in one constituency.
- 14 of the **East Midlands'** 46 constituencies are target seats. In 13 of those seats, the cost of living is the key concern of voters. In the remaining target seats, the NHS and Cost of Living were tied as an issue of voters' concern.

- 11 of **London's** 73 constituencies are target seats. In 10 of those seats, the cost of living is the key concern of voters. In the remaining target seat, the NHS and Cost of Living were tied as an issue of voters' concern.
- 8 of the **East of England's** 58 constituencies are target seats. In all 8 of them cost of living is the key concern of voters.
- 12 of the **South East's** 84 constituencies are target seats. In 11 of those seats, the cost of living is the key concern of voters. In the remaining seat the NHS polled higher.
- 8 of the **South West's** 58 constituencies are target seats. In all 8 the cost of living is the key concern of voters.

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Contact:

Tom Railton, Director of Advocacy and Campaigns at the Economic Change Unit ,
07890837285, tom@econchange.org

Megan Davies, Policy and Programme Lead at the Economic Change Unit,
07446259386, megan@econchange.org

Notes to editors

1. Labour's 150 target seats data is taken from [Climbing the Mountain: Labour's Key Battlegrounds at the Next Election](#), by Ben Cooper, for the Fabian Society in January 2024.
2. This analysis is based on work conducted by [Survation for Lodestone Communications' Election Hub](#) published on 28th November 2023. Survation partnered with Lodestone Communications to conduct a poll of 8,205 adults on their voting intentions and 6,170 on topical issues. They carried out MRP modelling to analyse the results of the poll for each of the 632 parliamentary constituencies in Great Britain, based on boundaries for the 2024 General Election. Stop the Squeeze' analysis of the data [can be found here](#).
3. Stop the Squeeze's [The Bottom Line: How bold action on the cost of living will be the key to the next election](#), August 2023
4. Please find attached a range of maps attached (of both the UK and individual regions) displaying this data.

5. Stop the Squeeze is a coalition of 50 civil society organisations, trade unions and grassroots groups who are calling on the government to tackle the cost of living crisis by boosting incomes, raising taxes on wealth and guaranteeing that the essentials of life remain affordable for everyone. Their letter to the Chancellor can be found [here](#). The full list of supporting organisations can be found at www.stopthesqueeze.uk and spokespeople are available on request.