

## **Petitions Committee: The impact of increases in the cost of motor fuel**

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### **Activity**

The Petitions Committee ran an online survey to ask petitioners how recent increases in the cost of fuel have affected them.

This survey was conducted to inform a debate on a petition on this issue, to be held on 23 May 2022.

The survey was sent to people who signed the following petition:

[Reduce fuel duty and VAT by 40% for a period of 2 years](#)

We have summarised the key themes below and illustrated them with quotes from respondents.

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### **Response**

There were **2,323** complete responses to the Committee's survey

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### **Methodology**

NVivo Pro 12 (a data analysis software) was used to identify and contextualise the most common words and phrases in responses to open questions in the survey. This allowed us to group and summarise recurring themes which were threaded throughout much of the responses.

In addition to this analysis of the data, Committee staff manually reviewed hundreds of individual comments and answers, using both subject searches and randomised selection.

Survey questions which produced statistical results have been included in the summaries of key themes.

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- [About the respondents](#)

### Key themes:

- [The increasing cost of fuel is affecting respondents living in both rural and urban settings](#)
  - 62% of all respondents told us they live in a 'city' or 'town'. The remaining 38% told us they live in a 'rural' or 'village' setting.
- [Despite rising costs, some respondents have no choice but to drive in order to do their job, or access essential services](#)
  - Respondents were more likely to tell us they drive for 'social/leisure' purposes than to 'commute to and from work, or a place of education' or for 'business/commercial' reasons
  - The majority of respondents who told us they drive to commute to work or place of education, or for their business, said they do so for 'more than 200 miles' per week
- [Many respondents' livelihoods are becoming threatened by increasing fuel costs](#)
  - Rising fuel prices are having a negative impact on many respondents' jobs
  - In some cases, these increases are being passed on to respondents' customers, and that this has led to a loss of business
- [Respondents told us they are having to make difficult sacrifices to get by](#)
  - Rising fuel prices are forcing many respondents to go without other essentials, such as heating or lighting, to make ends meet
  - Many told us that rising fuel prices, in the context of a wider cost of living 'crisis', were affecting their physical and mental health
- [Fuel prices are affecting some respondents' ability to deliver health and care services, or meet caring responsibilities](#)
  - Increasing fuel prices are making it harder for some respondents to deliver medical and social care services, or to meet their caring responsibilities
  - Some said this is putting vulnerable people at risk
- [Increasing fuel prices have compounded issues created by the Covid-19 pandemic](#)
  - Many respondents told us they feel unable to afford to visit friends and family, and that this has been particularly difficult having been unable to see them for much of the past 2 years due to Covid-19 restrictions

- Several respondents told us increased fuel costs have made it harder for their business to recover from losses suffered during the pandemic
  - [The recent, temporary cut in fuel duty was felt to be insufficient](#)
    - Several respondents felt the recent reduction in fuel duty did not go far enough, and was ineffective
  - [Reform of mileage allowance payments was called for by some](#)
    - Several respondents expressed concern that the approved amounts for Mileage Allowance Payments (MAPs) have not increased in line with wider fuel prices
  - [Respondents called on the Government to take other actions to reduce the impact of rising costs on motorists](#)
    - Respondents proposed a range of actions, including imposing profit limits, a 'windfall tax' on energy companies, and changes to vehicle excise duty ('road tax')
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## About the respondents

- Responses were received from every nation and region of the UK.
- The highest numbers of responses were from people who told us they lived in the South East of England (14%), North West of England (12%) and the South West of England (12%). 9% told us they lived in Scotland, 7% in Wales and 1% in Northern Ireland.

## Key themes:

### The increasing cost of fuel is affecting respondents living in both rural and urban settings

- 62% of all respondents told us they live in a 'city' or 'town'. The remaining 38% told us they live in a 'rural' or 'village' setting.

### Respondents most commonly drive for social or leisure purposes

- Respondents were more likely to tell us they drive for 'social/leisure' purposes than to 'commute to and from work, or a place of education' or for 'business/commercial' reasons. This was relatively consistent across all settings (See Figure 1)
- The majority of respondents who told us they drive to commute to work or place of education, or for their business, said they do so for 'more than 200 miles' per week. This too was relatively consistent across all settings,

though was a less common response from those living in a city

### Despite rising costs, some respondents have no choice but to drive in order to do their job, or access essential services

- Several respondents told us they have no alternative to driving, citing a range of factors including infrequent or poorly connected public transport services, and accessibility concerns

## Quotes

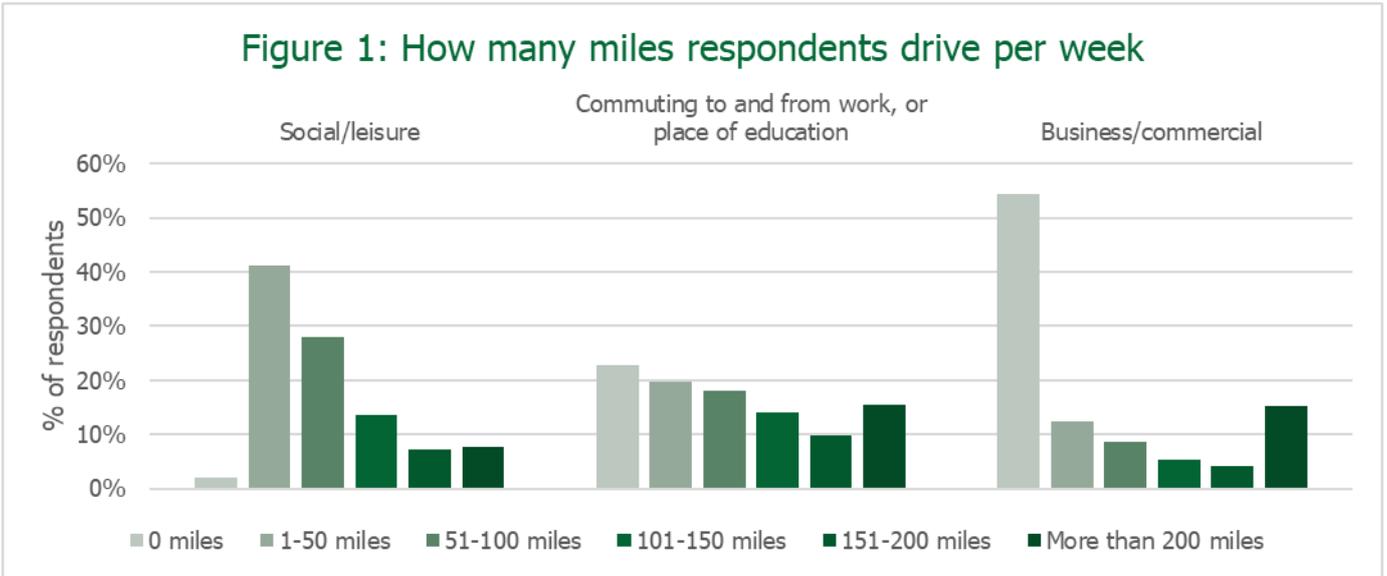
"My husband commutes 300 miles a week. We live in the Scottish borders and he works shifts in rural Northumberland. There are no other transport options, he has to drive. The cost of fuel has essentially become a pay cut for him, not ideal when we are facing so many other price rises."

"Public transport links for my work don't start early enough to arrive in time to start work, meaning vehicle use is essential."

"We live in an isolated village, with a bus service that runs once a week, out of the village and back again. My wife is disabled so the car we have is absolutely vital to us. I've recently had to stop work to look after her full time."

"I have a Mobility car which I need to get to my Doctors and various hospital appointments as it is extremely hard to walk due to the severe pain, I depend on my partner/carer to do all the driving. Due to the excessive increase in petrol prices I am unable to use my car as I would normally do."

**Figure 1: How many miles respondents drive per week**



**Many respondents' livelihoods are becoming threatened by increasing fuel costs**

- We were told that rising fuel prices were having a negative impact on many respondents' jobs (See Figure 2)
- In some cases, we were told these increases are being passed on to respondents' customers, and that this has led to a loss of business

**Quotes**

"My travel to and from work is almost a hundred miles a day, six days a week, I have been trying to find a local b&b next to work to cut costs."

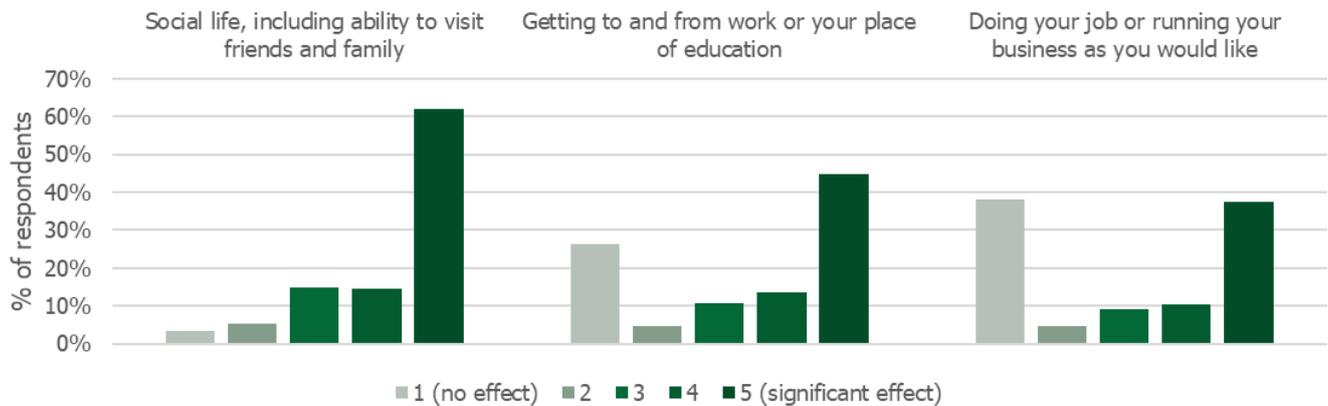
"Because of the nature of my business I do need a bigger vehicle and the commute I do has had a knock on effect with the prices I have to charge my customers. Because of the rise a lot of my regular customers have gone

from weekly or fortnightly services to monthly. This has had a dramatic effect on my income and has had me questioning if my business will survive."

"We run a small farm and kiln dried firewood business [...] We've gone from putting an average of £1200 per week in a lorry to an average of £2000. Although we've managed to get some of our rates up we can't get them all up. Some weeks struggling to make a profit. With local firewood deliveries to running the farm and processing firewood and the trucks our fuel costs are massive. Passing this on to the general public our customers doesn't feel right."

"I've had to cut my work days in half [due to increased costs]. I'm a supply teacher, therefore I can be working in a school anywhere in the East Midlands."

**Figure 2: Effect of increased fuel prices on aspects of respondents' lives**



### Respondents told us they are having to make difficult sacrifices to get by

- Rising fuel prices are forcing many respondents to go without other essentials, such as heating or lighting, to make ends meet
- Many told us that rising fuel prices, in the context of a wider cost of living 'crisis', were affecting their physical and mental health

### Quotes

"I work for the NHS and have two disabled children it has been a nightmare as I can't afford to keep [putting] fuel [in] but I need it as they attend a special school a few miles away and I have to go to different hospitals for work. I go without food so my kids have food and fuel all because the prices keep rising."

"I now opt for cold cheap dinners just so I can fuel my car, I cannot remember the last time me and my partner could afford to go

for our monthly date night meal which is impacting our mental health."

"As a self employed driver my profits have reduced significantly. It is having a profound effect on my family and I. As a result of reduced income it is putting a strain on my relationship and it is having a negative effect on the wellbeing of my two children. I am having sleeping problems as I am constantly worried about my families finances."

"I don't know how I'm going to manage. The government has to do more for people around disability benefits I haven't stuck my heating on for months Because I'm frightened I won't be able to afford it."

"I have had to remove my child from nursery as the cost of getting her there and back, as well as the cost of the actual childcare has become unsustainable."

## **Fuel prices are affecting some respondents' ability to deliver health and care services, or meet caring responsibilities**

- Several respondents, particularly those in more rural areas, told us how increasing fuel prices are making it harder for them to deliver medical and social care services, or to meet their caring responsibilities.
- Some said this is putting vulnerable people at risk

### **Quotes**

"I am a home carer for the elderly and vulnerable who live at home and we are paid little enough as it is with petrol prices so high that comes out our pockets not the company I work for. This means if I don't have the money to put fuel in my car I can't go to work and these vulnerable people don't get essential care."

"We provide domiciliary care for clients who want to spend their last days at their own house where they have lived for 50+ years and companies are having to turn them away because we simply cannot afford to work at the local authority rates and afford fuel to get to them."

"[Fuel prices] make it unaffordable to visit my elderly mother who lives 41 miles away more than once a week, the round trip has significantly increased in fuel costs. I am an unpaid carer for my mother who is 85 and lives alone."

## **The recent increase in the cost of fuel has compounded issues created by the Covid-19 pandemic**

- Many respondents told us they feel unable to afford to visit friends and family, and that this has been particularly difficult having been unable to see them for much of the past 2 years due to Covid-19 restrictions
- Several respondents told us increased fuel costs have made it harder for their business to recover from losses suffered during the pandemic

### **Quotes**

"I haven't seen my mum in months because of how much it will cost me to drive to see her – 2 years for lockdown and now it feels like another worse punishment."

"My children and grandchildren live 100 and 140 miles away so I have had to restrict travelling to see them due to the cost of fuel. The two years of Covid restrictions has affected my mental state and not to be able to see my children and grandchildren has exasperated this condition."

"We just don't do days out - it's like a continuation of lockdown. We spent our leisure time within 10 miles of home."

"I am a taxi driver and the rising costs in fuel straight after a pandemic is killing this industry, this is why people can't get taxis any more."



## **The recent, temporary cut in fuel duty was felt to be insufficient**

- Several respondents told us they felt the recent time-limited reduction in fuel duty of 5p per litre did not go far enough, and was ineffective as the saving was quickly cancelled out by rising prices

### **Quotes**

“There is no excuse for fuel prices to be that high when most of the price is tax. To be fair, the 5p cut which allegedly it was massive for them, meant nothing to us, 2 weeks after prices were the same. They need to drop back to boost the economy.”

“I have just filled my tank ready for my upcoming journey and it cost me £73 of which about £36.23 is duty and VAT. Anyone who can do maths will know that the measly 5p cut in duty is much less than the extra amount the exchequer is getting compared to one year ago.”

“It has made it even more expensive to take my daughter to her 2 or 3 hospital appointments every week. I have gone from spending £140 to £200+ a month on fuel. The 5p cut I fuel duty made no difference because all the stations increased their prices by 10p the night before so it was pointless.”

## **Reform of mileage allowance payments was called for by some**

- Several respondents expressed concern that the [approved amounts](#) for Mileage Allowance Payments (MAPs) have not increased in line with

wider fuel prices. This limits how much many employees can recoup in expenses when using their own vehicle for work

### **Quotes**

“I work for Powys county council, the HMRC [MAP] rate covers less than half of my fuel costs. Hmrc rate sure should be over hauled.”

“I have to travel a lot for my job along with thousands of other domiciliary carers, rising fuel costs has had a great impact on our finances. Although we get paid fuel allowance this has stayed the same whilst fuel costs have risen. It has led a lot of domiciliary carers having to pay out of their own pockets to carry on doing their jobs.”

“An increase in the 45p per mile allowance to 60p and extending it to 15,000 miles is needed.”

## **Respondents called on the Government to take other actions to reduce the impact of rising costs on motorists**

- Respondents proposed a range of actions the Government could take, including imposing profit limits, a 'windfall tax' on energy companies, and changes to vehicle excise duty ('road tax')

### **Quotes**

“This is global companies making billions more on their quarterly figures and we are left unable to heat our homes! Why isn't there a cap on their profits.”

“There should absolutely be a temporary windfall tax on the oil companies, seeing as they continue to post increasing profits.”

“We should have a law stating no fuel company [can] charge [more than] an agreed figure per litre, the prices charged from one fuel company to another needs to be equal.”

“If the government drop the car road tax I think driver's/vehicle owners would probably be a bit more happier.”