

'I can't afford what I used to': how the cost of living has changed viewing habits

Level 2: Intermediate

1 Warmer

a. Which of these activities would you give up in order to save money? Put them in order from 1–6, with 1 being the activity you would be most likely to give up and 6 being the least likely. Give reasons for your choice.

- streaming services
- your mobile phone
- your gym membership
- having a shower once a day
- takeaway food
- coffee at a bakery / coffee shop

2 Key words

a. Find the following words in the text. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

1. a verb meaning *that a legal agreement or obligation is now ended* _____
(paragraph 4)
2. an adjective to describe *someone who is not able to use a part of their body or brain properly because of injury or disease* _____ (paragraph 7)
3. an adjective meaning *warm and comfortable and making you feel relaxed*
_____ (paragraph 7)
4. a noun meaning *something expensive that you enjoy but do not really need*
_____ (paragraph 7)
5. a verb meaning *have enough money to be able to pay for something*
_____ (paragraph 9)
6. a plural noun meaning *amounts of money that you have to spend regularly, for example on your rent or fuel bills* _____ (paragraph 10)
7. an adjective meaning *not being used yet but existing in large amounts that could bring profits or benefits* _____ (paragraph 11)

'I can't afford what I used to': how the cost of living has changed viewing habits

Level 2: Intermediate

8. a noun meaning *the price that someone says they will charge you for doing a particular piece of work* _____ (paragraph 14)
9. a verb meaning *carefully consider a situation again* _____ (paragraph 15)
10. a four-word verb phrase meaning *use a good situation to get the best possible result*
_____ (paragraph 18)

'I can't afford what I used to': how the cost of living has changed viewing habits

Level 2: Intermediate

Gemma McSherry and Clea Skopeliti

23 July, 2022

- 1 The UK inflation rate is around 10% and could increase to 12% by October, 2022. The cost of living crisis has led to many people finding ways to reduce their expenses.
- 2 One area includes streaming services. Netflix lost one million subscribers in the second quarter of 2022.
- 3 We spoke to four people about how the rising cost of living has affected their viewing habits.

'I haven't watched it in ages'

- 4 Kate, a retired 71-year-old, says she has cancelled Netflix and will cancel Prime later. "I haven't watched it for ages so what am I paying for?"
- 5 Kate says she decided to give up the streaming services partly due to the cost. "I've been trying to reduce my weekly spending. There's no point if you're not using the service."
- 6 She adds that she might go back to Netflix in the autumn, "if they bring some interesting shows," but has mostly been watching series on BBC iPlayer and ITV.

'I've had to cut back on the things that previously weren't luxuries'

- 7 Jess is disabled and is unable to work. "Because it is sometimes difficult to get out of the house, I enjoy making my home a cosy and fun space," she says. "But I've had to cut back on the things that previously weren't luxuries but *are* now – and streaming services are one of those things."
- 8 Jess's monthly bills have increased – "and that's during summer; I don't know what's going to happen in winter," she says. She was paying £40 a month for her streaming services.
- 9 "I only have Netflix now, as it's the one I watch the most. I just can't afford the things I used to."

'My pension is not going up'

- 10 The cost of living crisis has made 72-year-old Ted Cardwell check his monthly outgoings. Cardwell, who is retired, has decided to cancel Netflix and Amazon Prime to save money, adding that he would return if they offered a discount rate for pensioners.
- 11 "I think a lot of them discount pensioners because they think we don't use streaming services, but lots of my friends do. I think it's an untapped market."
- 12 Ted says the reason is financial rather than because the services are getting worse.
- 13 "We're doing pretty well, but you've got to be conscious and cut our spending," he says. "The cost of living is going up and my pension is not going up with it."

'We decided to rationalize our outgoings'

- 14 "My wife and I are extending our home and when we got the quote for building costs, we saw how much prices have rocketed," says John, 41, an industrial engineer from Cambridge.
- 15 "We decided to increase our savings and reassess our finances. As I have a free Amazon Prime subscription, we decided to save money on other streaming services."
- 16 John now only joins and leaves services when there is a particular show he wants to watch.
- 17 "We cancelled Netflix, but recently re-joined to watch a series and cancelled again after two months. We joined Disney+ to watch the *Star Wars* films, but I'm thinking of cancelling it too."
- 18 John and his wife were not making the most of their subscriptions, which were costing nearly £50 a month. "We have work and two young kids, so there's no time to start watching a new box set."

© Guardian News and Media 2022

First published in *The Guardian*, 23/07/2022

'I can't afford what I used to': how the cost of living has changed viewing habits

Level 2: Intermediate

3 Comprehension check

a. Are these statements True (T) or False (F) according to the article? Correct any that are false.

1. The UK inflation rate is decreasing.
2. The cost-of-living crisis has caused a fall in the number of Netflix subscribers.
3. Kate cancelled Netflix because she wasn't using it.
4. She will return to Netflix in the autumn.
5. Jess can't work because she has a disability.
6. Jess doesn't have Netflix.
7. Ted thinks there should be a discount rate for pensioners.
8. He is cancelling his streaming services because they are getting worse.
9. The cost of extending John's house has increased a lot.
10. He pays a lot of money for his Amazon Prime subscription.

4 Key language

a. Rearrange the words to make phrases from the text.

1. of the in quarter 2022 second
2. cost the rising living of
3. the to due cost partly
4. weren't previously luxuries things that
5. watch the one most I the
6. particular a watch he show to wants

'I can't afford what I used to': how the cost of living has changed viewing habits

Level 2: Intermediate

5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- "Who needs streaming services? There's so much to see on the internet."
- "The best way to save money is to stay at home."

6 In your own words

- a. What is the inflation rate in your country? Which things are more expensive now than they were before the Coronavirus pandemic? Search online to find at least ten items that are more expensive and find out by what percentage they have increased in price since March, 2020.
- b. Report your findings to the class.