



**Market Update: January
2024**



Part 1: December and full year state of trade review

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Part 1: December and full year state of trade review

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Overview

- 2023 was a year of record weather – with the driest February in 30 years, the wettest March in England for 40 years, the hottest June and September on record, and the wettest October for 25 years! December was no different, with mean temperatures and rainfall more than two times higher than December 2022, and storms causing disruption across the UK.
- But garden centres remained resilient in the unpredictability, with sales finishing 2023 +2% up on the 2022 calendar year. The delayed start to the gardening season saw garden/gardening categories finish 2023 -1% down on 2022, meanwhile catering and food/farm shop sales maintained continual strong growth throughout the year.
- In December, catering sales were up +21% versus December 2022, counteracting weaker Christmas sales (-7%) likely impacted by the current economic climate and COVID altering product replacement cycles on categories like lights, decorations and artificial trees.
- Consumer confidence showed an overall pattern of improvement throughout 2023 despite remaining in historically negative territory, ending the year 20 points higher than December 2022.
- As we begin 2024 with consumers less pessimistic about their finances, businesses are likely to continue to need to plan for extreme weather events on a more regular basis and look at ways to maintain profit margins with pressures on wage bills, shipping costs and interest rates remaining.

Read on for the detail...



Calendar Year Headlines (23 vs 22)



Overall Garden Centre Sales 2023

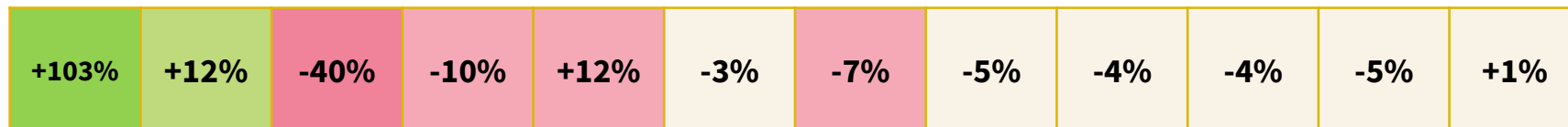
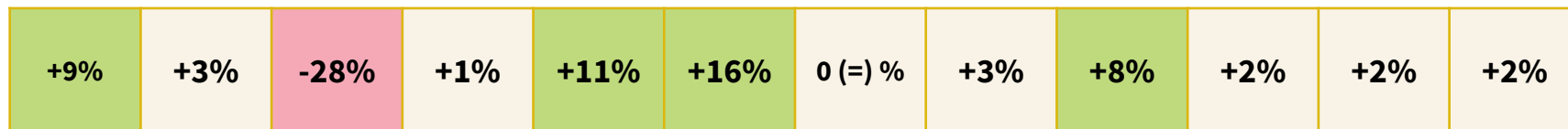


Mar 2023: Start of the gardening season is delayed due to unpredictable weather and stock availability

July 2022: Hottest on record in UK and wildfires throughout the summer period

Dec 2023: Inflation falls to 3.9% - the lowest rate since September 2021

2023 vs 2022



2023 vs 2021

Jan – Mar 2021: UK was in its 3rd National Lockdown

December 2021: UK starts to implement Plan B (masks in public spaces)

Key Points: December



**Overall
December
Garden Centre
sales** were **up
+2%** vs
December
2022

**Christmas
Sales** were
down -7%
on December
2022

**Consumer
confidence** grew
+2 points
to **-22** in
December 2023

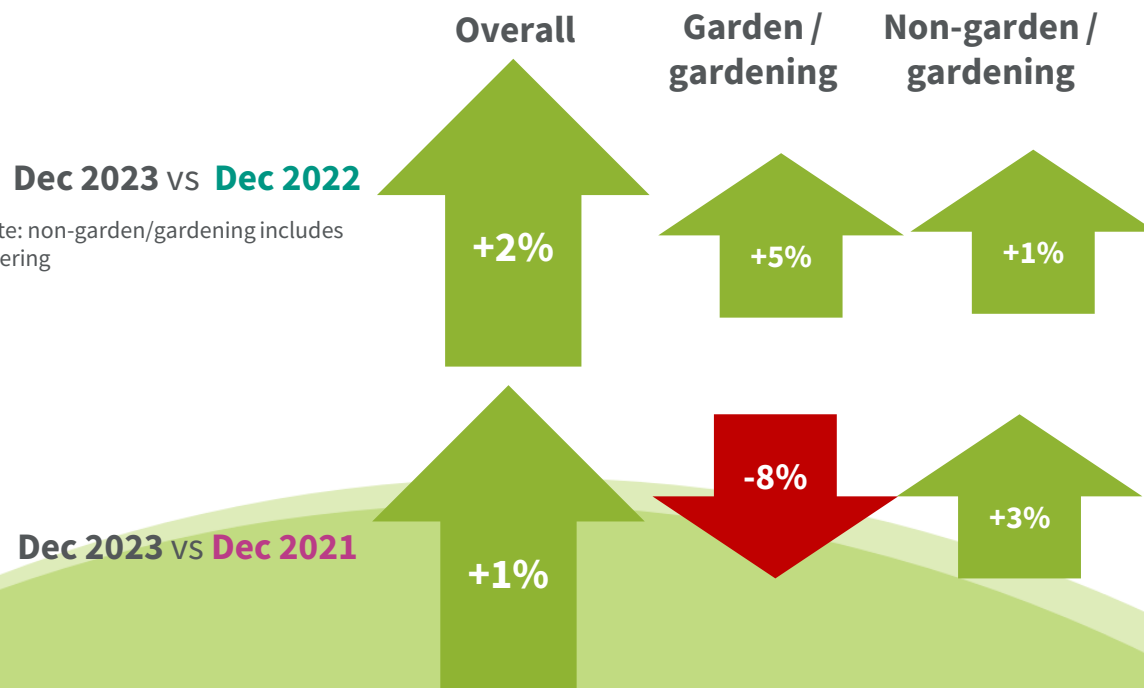
Indoor Plants
were
up +12%
compared
with
December 2022

December 2023
saw **106%**
more rainfall
than
December 2022

Garden centre sales: December



At the end of 2023, December saw overall sales of +2% when compared to December 2022. Considering that the British Retail Consortium Sensormatic IQ Footfall monitor showed footfall to retail parks and high street retailers as down -5%. Though floods and road closures may have impacted footfall in isolated areas across the UK. An unusually mild December mid-month may have contributed to improved garden/gardening category sales, which were up +5% - nevertheless December is a small month for this category (page 11). However, the same category did not do as well versus December 2021, down -8%, which may be the lasting effects of gardening during the covid era. Non-gardening categories did well but growth was much more modest than in previous months, up +1% versus December 2022, and +3% versus December 2021.



Note: non-garden/gardening includes catering

How are these figures calculated?

The national sales figures we report each month come from the HTA Garden Retail Monitor (GRM) system. We've now moved over to a newer GRM system where sales data from submitting garden centres is automatically uploaded to a secure server via the EPOS system. These garden centres can then login to the portal to benchmark their sales against regional and national averages for a variety of sales metrics. We're looking to sign up more garden centres to the system, allowing us to include more reliable detailed breakdowns of trends in sales in these Market Update reports.

If you're interested or for more information visit:
hta.org.uk/grm

(Figures reported are exclusive of VAT)

Garden centre sales volumes: Dec

Due to the high levels of price inflation in the current economic climate, we report on the quantity of goods sold in addition to sales values, to assess the level to which year-on-year comparisons are reflective of end-goods price increases or change in demand. Whilst analysis of volumes sold in the non-garden/gardening categories are in line with sales performance by value; the garden/gardening categories are seemingly impacted more by price inflation. Comparing December 2023 to December 2022, sales were up by +5%, but volumes were in fact down by -3%; suggesting higher prices are masking a slight drop off in demand. Average Transaction Value analysis suggests that the make up of goods in the basket hasn't shifted towards bigger ticket items. Comparisons between December 2023 and 2021 highlight inflation having a similar impact across the 2 year period.

Dec 2023 vs Dec 2022	Overall	Garden/gardening	Non-garden/gardening
Value of sales (£, exc. VAT)	+2%	+5%	+1%
Volume of sales	+1%	-3%	+1%

Dec 2023 vs Dec 2021	Overall	Garden/gardening	Non-garden/gardening
Value of sales (£, exc. VAT)	+1%	-8%	+3%
Volume of sales	-1%	-15%	+2%

December Transaction Numbers and Average Transaction Values (ATVs): In the Garden Store



Footfall to garden centres was up +2% , faring better compared to the reported British Retail Consortium Sensormatic IQ Footfall monitor of -5%. However, the increase in footfall year-on-year was quite modest for the garden centre when compared to the increase in footfall into garden centre cafés comparing December 2023 with December 2022 (see page 11). The Average Transaction Value for December was £24.90, down -2% on December 2022, despite price inflation (see pages 8 for sales volumes and pages 27 & 28 for further discussion on inflation). Consumer confidence has remained low (page 23), demonstrating hesitance to add too much to their baskets.

Transaction Numbers: Garden Store



Average Transaction Values (ATVs): Garden Store

exc. VAT
£ 24.90

inc. VAT
£ 29.09
DEC 2023

VS DEC 2022 (exc. VAT)	VS DEC 2021 (exc. VAT)
-2% (£25.45)	+1% (£24.62)

December Transaction Numbers and Average Transaction Values (ATVs): In the café/restaurant

Footfall into the garden centre restaurants and cafes were high, with transaction numbers up +17% on December 2022. 'This is despite rainfall more than twice the average December across the UK. Average Transaction Values were £11.71, up +3% on December 2022, as families go to the cafés to enjoy time together leading up to the Christmas period, and potentially attend any events related to Christmas available.

Transaction Numbers: Café/restaurant



DEC 2023 vs DEC 2022

Average Transaction Values (ATVs): Café/restaurant

exc. VAT
£ **11.71**

inc. VAT
£ **13.05**

DEC 2023

VS DEC
2022
(exc. VAT)

+3%
(£11.36)

NB: December 2021 was still being impacted by changed café/restaurant layouts and consumer confidence, therefore it was not reported in comparisons

Garden centre sales: detailed Dec breakdown part 1



December is a much smaller month for garden/gardening categories as standard, but it performed well, up +5% in December 2023 versus December 2022. Indoor plants did well, up +12% on December 2022, likely thanks to the sale of Poinsettias and plant gifting characteristic of this time of the year. However, the best performing category was bedding plants, up +19%, though only contributed to 3% of total sales in December 2023 and 2% in December 2022. This reflects increased demand, with inflation playing a small part, as Bedding plant volumes were up +15% on December 2022 (for further plant inflation insights, see page 29).

We end the year with plant categories being the dominant category in garden/gardening sales, as per the year to end of December analysis. Bedding plants were up +12% and Hardy Plants +10% compared to year to end of December 2022.

Compared to December 2021, garden/gardening categories were down -8% overall. With the exception of indoor plants and plant care products being flat, all other categories were down versus December 2021, as we move on from the covid era.

Category	Dec 2023 vs 2022	YTD Dec 2023 vs 2022	Dec 2023 vs 2021
Bedding plants	+19%	+12%	-12%
Hardy plants, shrubs & trees	+18%	+10%	-15%
Indoor plants	+12%	+1%	0% (=)
Seeds (excl. grass seed)	+9%	+4%	-7%
Bulbs	-31%	0% (=)	-31%
Plant care products	+8%	+6%	0% (=)
Garden tools & equipment	+5%	0% (=)	-4%
Garden features & structures	+3%	-11%	-21%
Outdoor containers	-6%	-12%	-26%

YTD: Calendar year to end of December
12

Source: HTA Garden Retail Monitor

Garden centre sales: detailed Dec breakdown part 2

Non-garden/gardening sales were up +1% on December 2022, with catering being the top performing sub-category, up +21% compared with December 2022, followed by food & farm shop, up +7%. Footfall was up +17% on December 2022, with more consumers going to the cafés than the same period the year before. They may have also been purchasing food-related gifting options for loved ones at Christmas, or indulging in small treats during the tougher economic climate. Catering was greatly affected during the covid era, and was up +50% on December 2021, showing a bounceback.

Year to end of December also showed that catering was the top performer, up +23% on year to end of December 2023 versus year to end of December 2022, closely followed by food & farm shop (up +8%).

Christmas was down -7% on December 2022 as consumers face tougher economic situations and lower financial confidence, affecting how they approached the festive season, we delve into this category further on page 14.

Category	Dec 2023 vs 2022	Dec YTD 2023 vs 2022	Dec 2023 vs 2021
Indoor living & homewares	+1%	-4%	-11%
Gifting	+6%	+3%	+5%
Wild bird care	-9%	-2%	-11%
Pets	+3%	+6%	+7%
Food & farm shop	+7%	+8%	+15%
Catering	+21%	+23%	+50%
Christmas	-7%	-4%	-8%

YTD: Calendar year to end of December

Xmas Sales: December

Christmas sales overall were down -7% on December 2022. Only the tree decorations subcategory was up on December 2022 at +1%. However, real Christmas trees were +7% in November 2023 versus November 2022 suggesting trees were purchased early. Covid had an effect on product replacement cycles. More consumers bought Christmas goods during the Covid period to bring some positivity to an uncertain and difficult period of time. However, combined with cost-of-living becoming more evident at the end of 2022, this brought hesitation towards replacing items such as artificial trees and lights. Garden centres may also face competition from discount retailers on these products, which may have held greater share during the current tough economic climate.



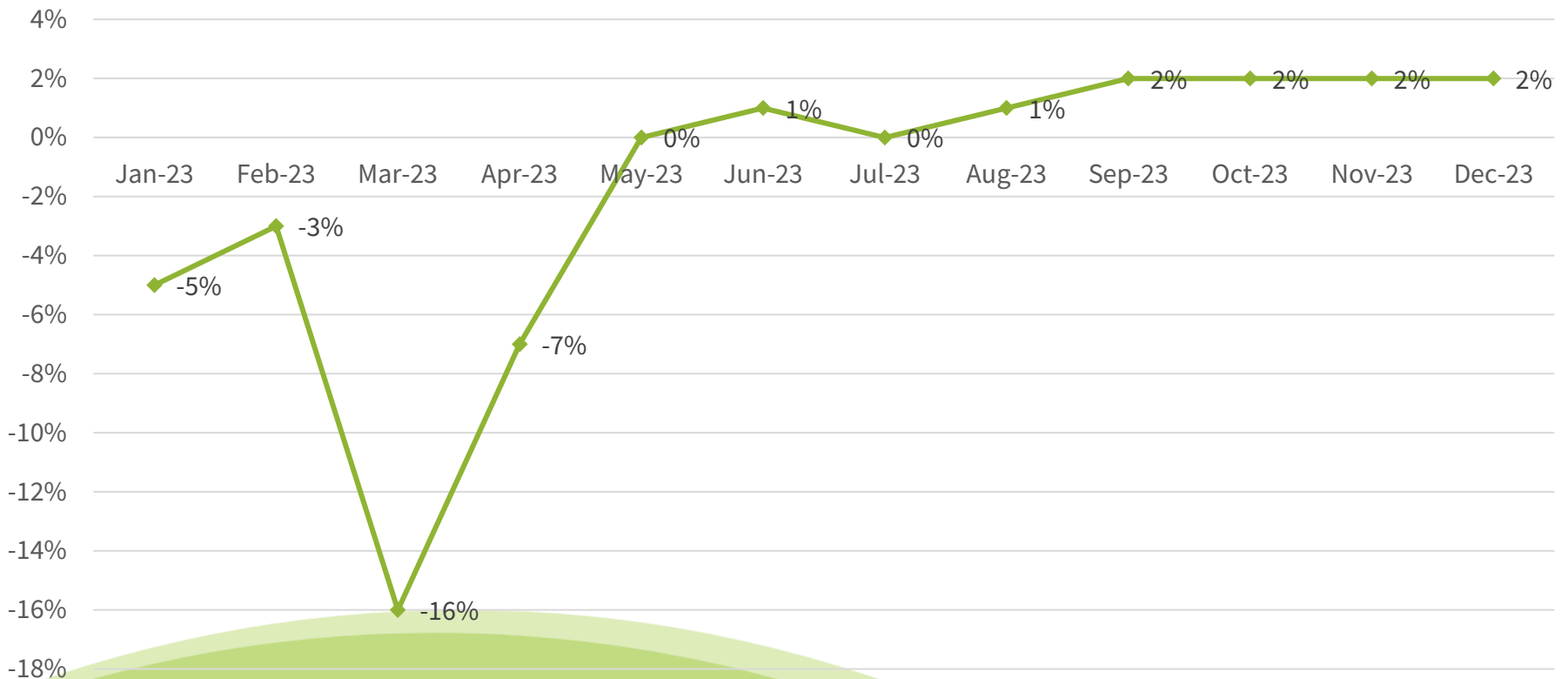
Category	Dec 2023 vs 2022	Dec 2023 vs 2021
Artificial Trees	-20%	-9%
Tree Decorations	+1%	-6%
Lights	-5%	-26%
Real xmas Trees	-2%	-1%



Garden Centre Sales: Cumulative calendar year to end of each month



2023 vs 2022

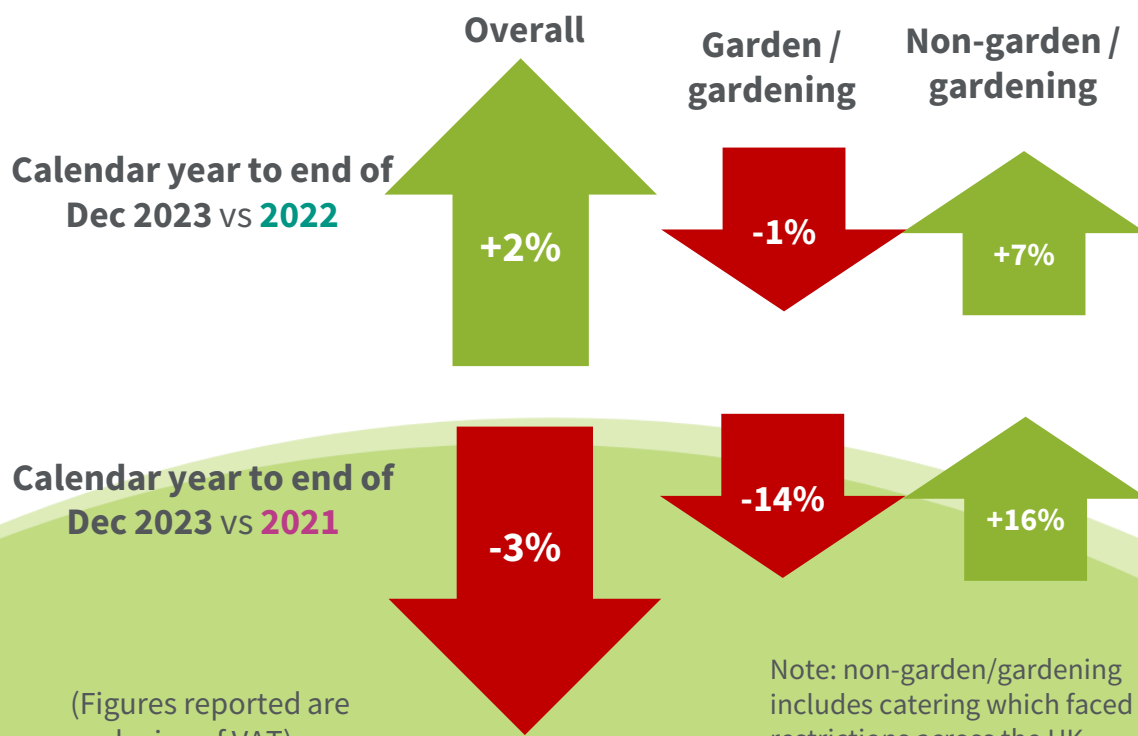


To summarise 2023, there was a delayed start to the garden season captured in the graph above, seeing overall sales fall -16% for the year to end of March 2023 compared to year to end of March 2022, as wet weather dampened appetite gardening. However, we saw slow and steady recovery, with warmer weather in the summer months of 2023 increasing demand, and catering continuing to act as a buffer. The last quarter saw stability before finishing the 2023 calendar year up +2% on 2022.

Garden centre sales: calendar year to end of Dec



Overall, 2023 finished up +2% compared with the calendar year of 2022. This was despite a delayed but successful garden season, unstable weather for gardening, increasing cost of living and overall economic instability. Non-garden/gardening categories performed well in year to end of December comparisons (+7% in the 2022 calendar year and +16% in the 2021 calendar year). This was boosted by catering sales up +23% compared to year to the 2022 calendar year. Garden/gardening categories were down compared to the 2022 calendar year at -1%, as notably sales of big-ticket items such as garden furniture were behind 2022 levels. Year to end of December 2023 versus 2022 calendar year were reflective of the move away from covid measures.



Note: non-garden/gardening includes catering which faced restrictions across the UK

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Weather

December 2023 was the 8th wettest December on record, and uncharacteristically mild, despite hard frosts in the first week of the month. Storms Elin and Fergus hit mid-month, bringing plenty of rain and wind, but also mild weather which continued from mid-month onwards. Scotland also saw the effect of Storm Gerrit towards the end of the month, bringing more rain and wind to the region, causing flooding and road closures. Prolonged periods of rainfall saw more than twice the rainfall than December 2022. In addition, the mean temperature was more than two times higher than in December 2022.

	Dec 2023	Dec 2022
 Hours of sunshine	27.9	49.4

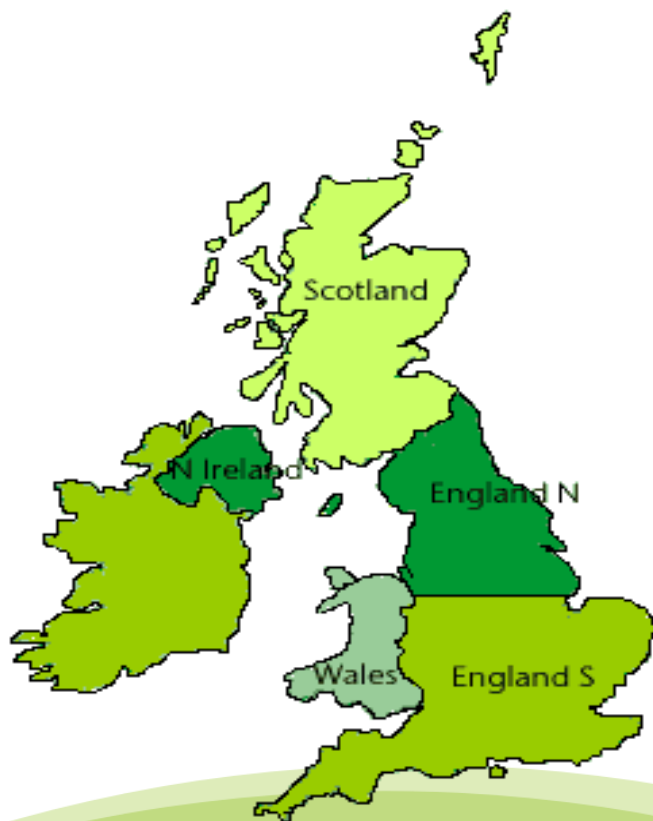
	Dec 2023	Dec 2022
 Rainfall (mm)	188.0	91.3

	Dec 2023	Dec 2022
 No. of rain days	20.9	15.2

	Dec 2023	Dec 2022
 Mean temperature (Celsius)	5.8	2.5

The figures reported are national averages for the UK. To view the figures on a regional basis: [click or tap here](#) to visit the MET Office website and view the year ordered stats by month.

Weather by region



Region	Mean Temp (Degrees Celsius)	Sunshine Hours	Rainfall (mm)
Overall	5.8	27.9	188.0
South England	7.4	26.6	128.4
North England	5.7	35.4	176.4
Wales	7.0	21.9	258.1
Scotland	3.6	26.9	246.0
Northern Ireland	6.5	25.1	169.6

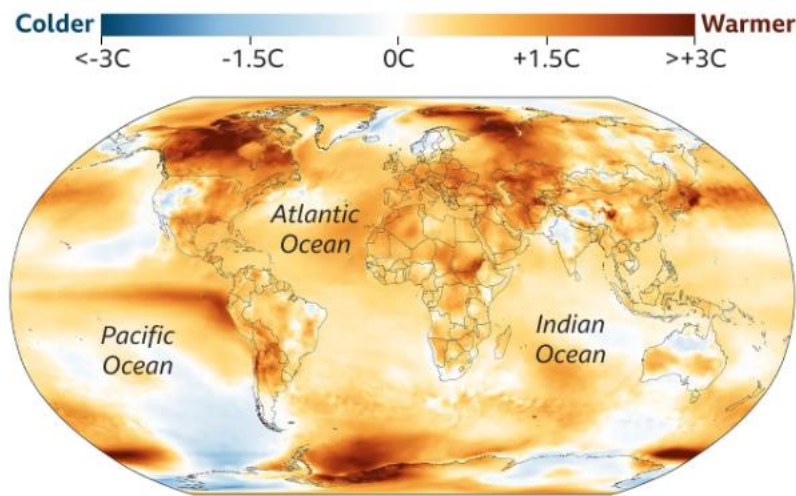
The UK experienced three storms in December 2023, bringing plenty of rainfall to parts of the UK, in particular northwest England, and parts of Scotland. Wales was 1.5 times wetter than December 2022, and being the mildest region in December 2023, Southern England was 1.9 times warmer than December 2022.

Global Weather: 2023

2023 was the world's hottest year on record, bringing an alarming contrast in weather worldwide. This was by a large margin, of 1.48 degrees Celsius warmer than the long-term average, with some areas seeing temperatures 3 degrees Celsius higher than the long-term average (see below). From heatwaves to severe flooding and forest fires, the effects of climate change were apparent last year. Of the whole year, 200 days saw record breaking daily temperatures, and as we enter 2024 we should expect further weather instability. The UK experienced extremes as well in 2023, with extensive flooding seen throughout the year, and with June being the hottest on record for the country, we see the Environment Agency urge preparation for opposite ends of the scale, from droughts to flooding (page 23).

Most of the world much hotter than normal

Average surface air temperature in 2023 compared with 1991-2020 average



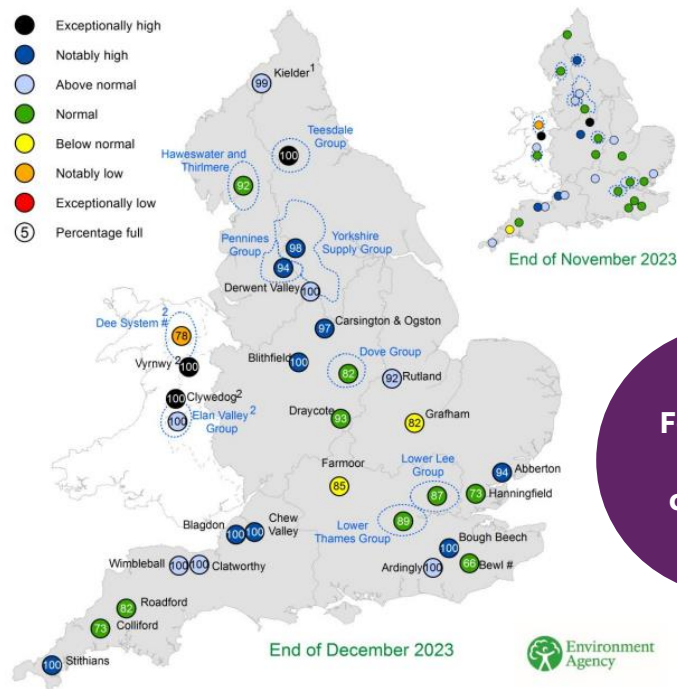
Source: ERA5, C3S/ECMWF

BBC

The map to the left was created from the **European Centre for Medium-Range Weather forecasts (ECMWF)** and the **Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S)'s ERA5 analysis**. For more information, [click here](#).

Current reservoir levels

Thanks to 3 storms hitting the UK in December 2023, total reservoir stocks for England went up to 92% of capacity. Two thirds of reservoir storage sites were categorised as above normal or higher. Eight reservoirs recorded increases of more than 10% compared to the end of November.



**For the full
reports
click here**

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Forecast river flows

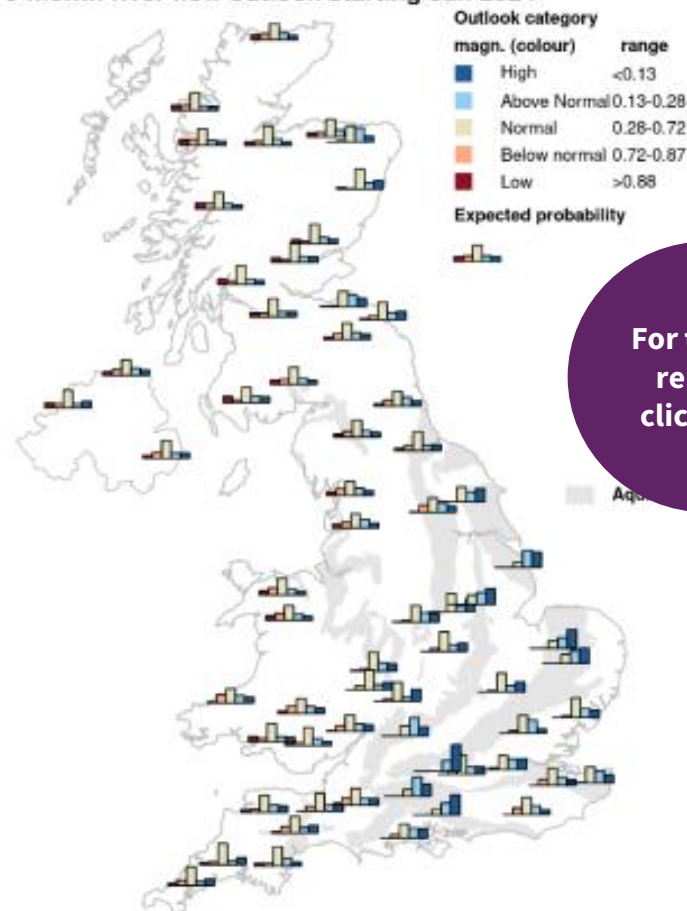
In the 3-month Outlook starting January 2024, river flows are expected to be above normal, and high in southern and East England (certain catchments in those areas). West Scotland, Northern Ireland, North-West England and North Wales are expected to be normal in the next 3 months.

To interpret the infographic, the higher the bars shaded red or orange, the greater the likelihood is in that area of river flows being at low or below normal levels. The higher the yellow/fawn bar, the greater the chance of river flows in the normal range.

The UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology have launched an online tool to view the drought in different regions in the UK-

<https://eip.ceh.ac.uk/apps/droughts/>

3-month river flow outlook starting Jan 2024



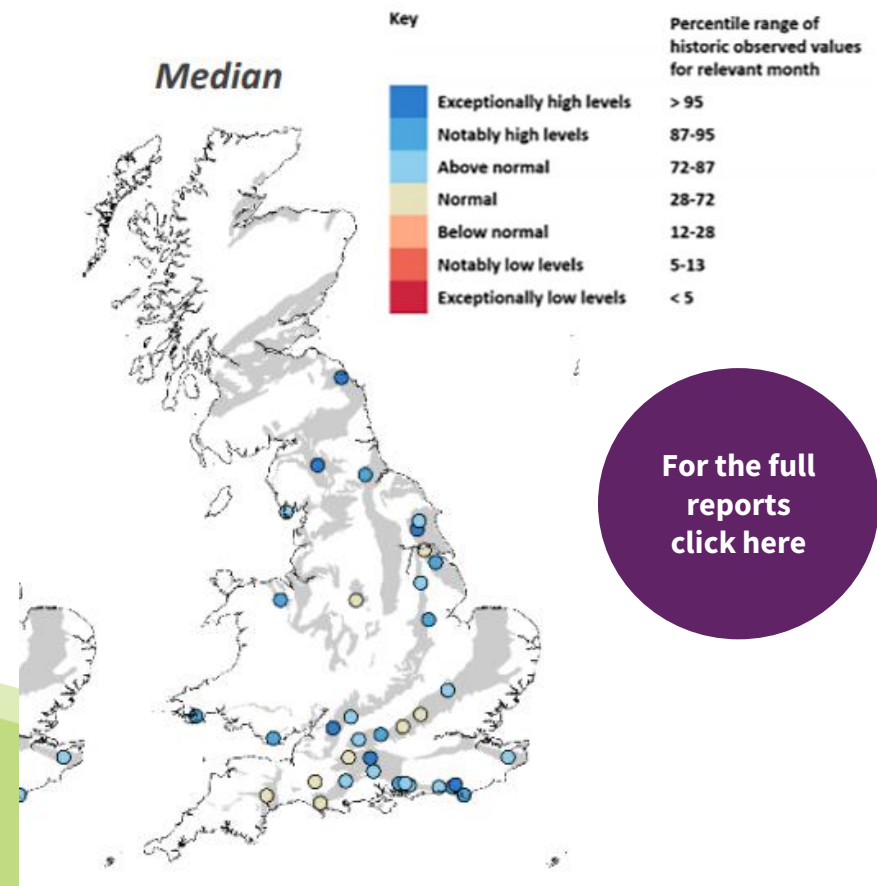
For the full reports click here

Forecast groundwater levels



Three-month groundwater outlook starting on January 2024 (based on median rainfall forecasts)

For the January to March 2024 forecast, groundwater levels are expected to be above normal to notably high or exceptionally high levels, especially in the South Downs Chalk, Wessex Chalk and Jurassic Limestones sites.



For the full
reports
click here

The current water situation

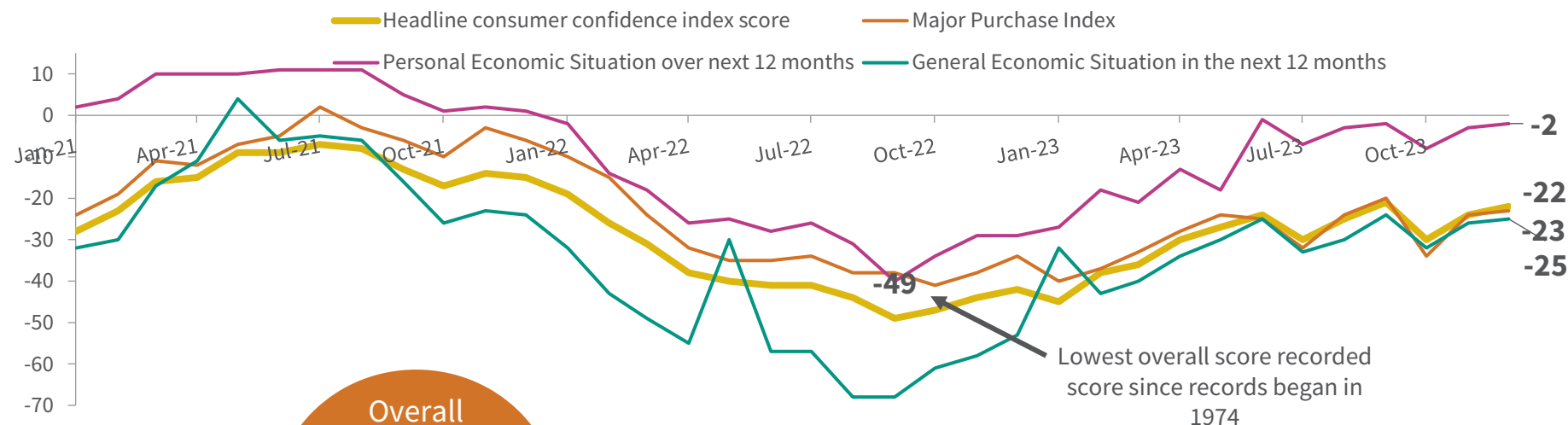
- The HTA continues to represent the horticulture sector on the Environment Agency's (EA) National Drought Group which comprises government, water companies and key farming and environmental groups. Access the latest update from the Group here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/time-to-invest-in-our-water-security>
- The unpredictable weather didn't end in December 2023, as the country was hit by three Storms (Elin, Fergus and Gerrit). Reservoir storage has risen to 92% in England thanks to heavy rainfall and flooding. The Environment Agency remains vigilant, preparing for all weather eventualities for the rest of the year and into next year. In November 2023, nations came together at COP28 to discuss the concerns around water and food supplies. The UK will help provide funding of £39 million to Just Transitions, a newly formed water security programme, helping countries manage water resources responsibly: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-backs-work-to-protect-global-water-and-food-supplies-at-cop28>
- The Government's [Plan for Water](#) introduces investment in infrastructure and a second round of Water Management Grants to fund more reservoirs and better irrigation equipment.
- We will continue to work to ensure that any messaging relating to responsible use of water does not adversely affect participation in gardening. Businesses looking to help give ideas to gardeners of how to go about gardening in a way that makes responsible use of water can draw on content and ideas published by the RHS: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/garden-design/drought-resistant-gardening>
- HTA member businesses should prepare for all scenarios and take action to ensure continuity of supply:
 - Ensure that as much of your storage capacity is filled as is possible
 - Use water responsibly and encourage customers to do the same
 - Invest in infrastructure for water recapture where possible
 - If you have an abstraction licence, you should expect this to be questioned if water scarcity increases:
 - If you have an abstraction licence where you use less than around 60% of the annual volume you may be asked by the Environment Agency to consider reducing your licenced abstraction, the "headroom". In these circumstances you need to make a careful consideration of the reply. Having given up part of a Licence of right you may find the new licence could end up being timed unless you apply for a variation.
 - If you have an abstraction licence that has not been used for four or more years you may be asked if you require it in the future and need to justify its future use.

Members can access the HTA's advice, resources and guidance on the ongoing situation and improving resilience here:
<https://hta.org.uk/news-events-current-issues/news/sustainability/water>

Consumer confidence: 2023



We ended 2023 with a bit of positivity in December, the festive season brought consumer confidence up +2 points, with all 5 measures within the index up on November 2023. In fact, the index was up +20 points on December 2022. The highest climbing contributing measure was consumers rating of the general economic situation, up +5 points on November 2023. The overall headline index score started at -45 in January 2023 and ended the year at -22, up +23 points overall showing steady improvement throughout, but clearly remaining in negative territory. Personal financial outlook has hovered close to positive integers, despite cost of living remaining challenging. General economic situation has slowly recovered since the Ukraine-Russia conflict affected the outlook in 2022.



Overall
index score
for
December:
-22

*this is 2 points higher than Nov 2023

Consumers are asked how the financial position of their household has changed over the last year and is expected to change in the next year, as well as that of the general economy. They're also asked if they believe 'now' is a good time to make major purchases or to be saving money. The first three measures in the table make up the overall index score. Whilst the Savings Index indicates whether consumers are looking to save rather than spend their money. **Relative scores are given as a comparative to when records began in 1974.**

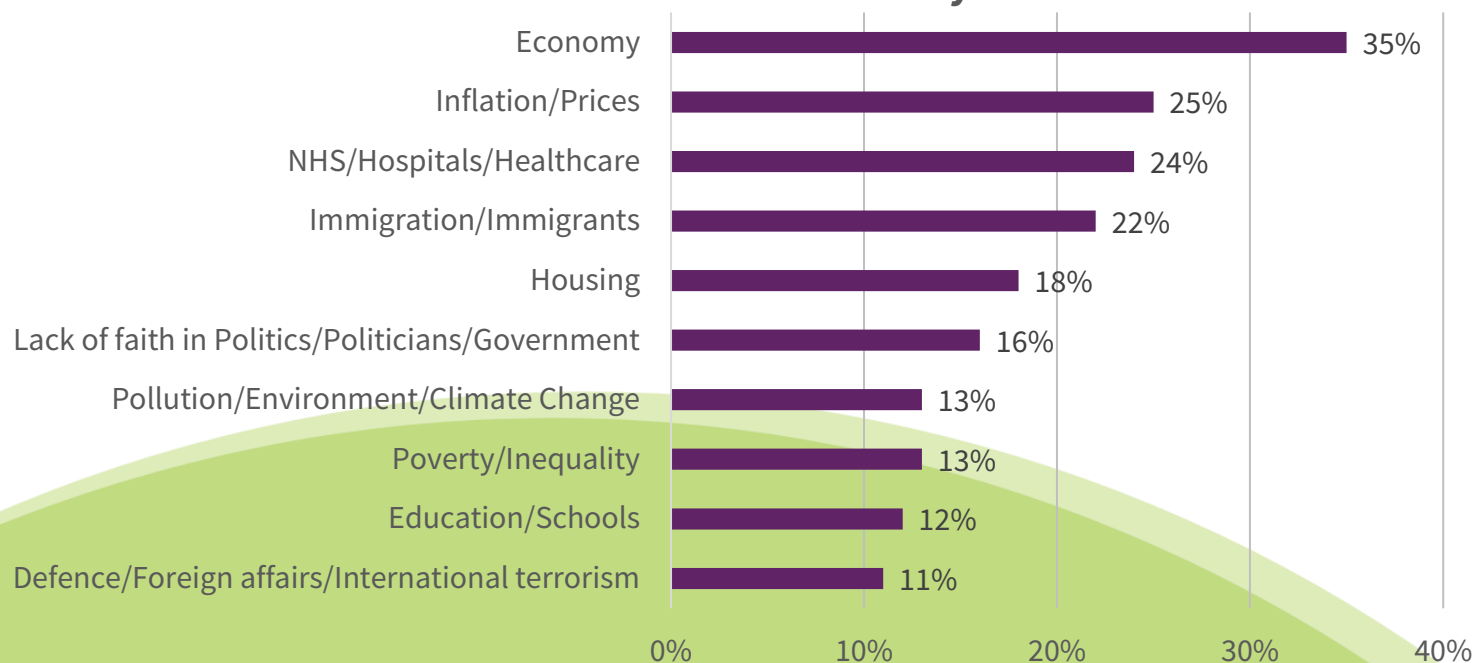
Consumer Issues Tracker: December

As the Issues Index is awaiting release for December, we report on November 2023's Issues Index. Economy remained the top cause for concern as the UK continues to face cost-of-living difficulties, increased energy costs and food inflation affecting regular expenditures. Although inflation was in 2nd position, concerns dropped -10% in November 2023 as inflation started to fall at the time, though the rise in inflation measures seen in December 2023 is bound to have some effect on this. We also saw disturbances in the Red Sea affecting Shipping of goods (see page 31) and weather this would affect the 10th measure reported in November which was Defence and Foreign affairs.

[ALTERNATIVE] As the Issues index is awaiting release for December, we report on November 2023's Issues Index. The economy remained the top cause for concern as the UK continues to face cost-of-living difficulties, increased energy costs and food inflation affecting regular expenditures. Although inflation was in 2nd position, concerns dropped -10% in November 2023 as inflation started to fall at a similar time. The combination of rising tensions in the Middle East and Ukraine-Russia conflicts brings the 10th measure of Defence and Foreign Affairs into the top 10 worries.



What do you see as the most/other important issues facing Britain today?



Change since Dec:	
%	Position
-3	=
-10	=
-7	=
=	=
+2	=
=	↓-1
-1	=
-1	=
-2	↓-2
+6	↑+3

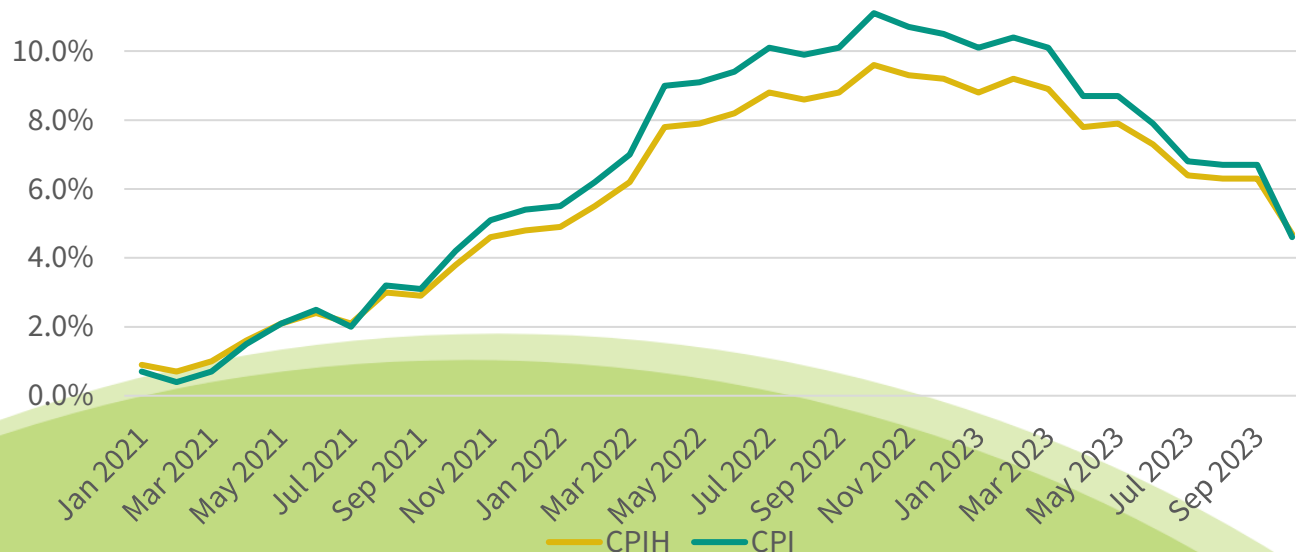
Base: 1,008 British adults aged 18+, 8th – 14th November 2023

Source: Ipsos

Consumer Price Indices (CPI and CPIH)



We explore some key indicators of the position of the UK economy to gauge the situation for consumers as well as member businesses. These indicators are the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) and Consumer Prices Index including owner occupier's housing costs (CPIH). Both inflation rates are measured as a percentage change over a 12-month period. The CPI in December 2023 rose for the first time since February 2022, up +0.1% to 4%. The CPIH remained the same as November 2023 at 4.2% in December. Upward contributors to the measures were due to alcohol and tobacco, whereas downward contributions came from food, non-alcoholic beverages, which is beneficial towards non-garden/gardening goods. This slight increase in CPI inflation comes after November 2023 recording the lowest rate in over 2 years. We've also looked at the Household Costs Indices (HCI), to show how costs affect different household subgroups of the population e.g. renters, owner occupiers, households with children, retired households etc. The HCI in September 2023 was 8.2% for all households, highlighting that the costs of running a household are significantly higher than a year ago. The cost of living as indicated by the HCI particularly increased for those with a mortgage (9.3%), likely attributed to high interest rates.



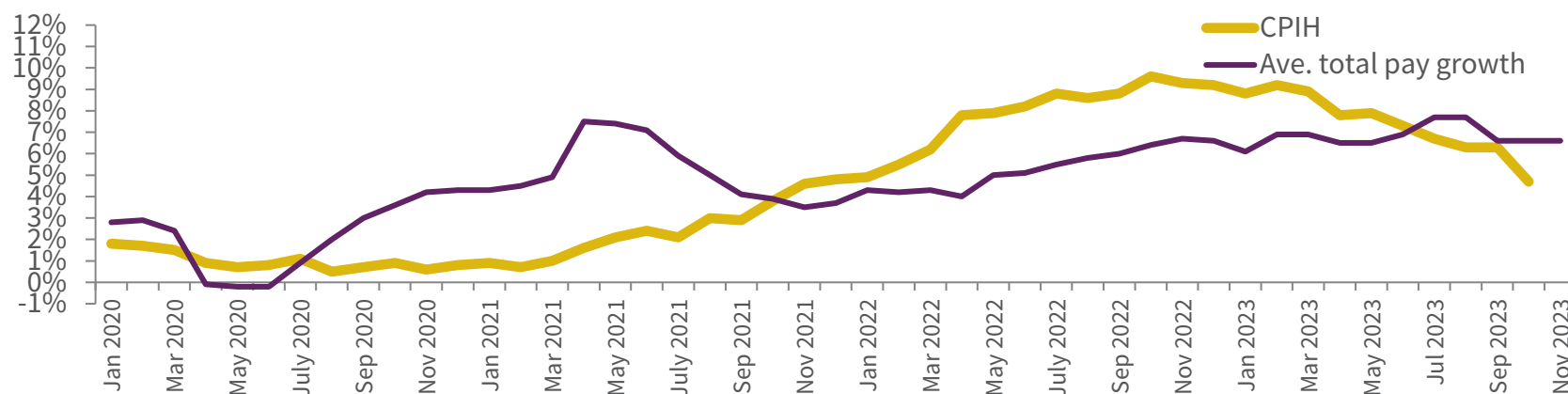
CPI
inflation
4.0%

CPIH
inflation
4.2%

Wages and Employment



To further explore key indicators of the position of the UK economy, we also investigate rates in relation to wages and employment: average pay growth (excl. bonuses) and the unemployment rate. Average pay growth (excl. bonuses) for September – November 2023 went down considerably by 1.1% to 6.6%, slowing wage growth after record high rates reported previously. As implementation of the new national living wage in April 2024 approaches, the Horticultural Industry will likely need to review overheads, and the wage bill to honour these changes. In addition, as the number of vacancies fall in combination to lower wage growth, the industry faces more challenges to fill vacant positions. The UK unemployment rate remained at 4.2% between July-September 2023. The employment rate has lowered slightly by 0.2% to 75.5%, adjusting for the number of full-time self-employed workers.



*Surge in income growth seen in spring 2021 is reflective of the year-on-year change to spring 2020 where many workers were on furlough and reduced pay

Unemployment
Rate (Jul-Sep 23)
4.2%

Average pay
growth (Sep
– Nov 23):
6.6%

Retail inflation on garden products



Our December trolley

(December 2023 vs December 2022 price inflation)



Hardy plants,
shrubs & trees
+5%



Bulbs spring/
Summer
+67%



Garden tools
and equipment
= (0%)



Real Xmas trees
= (0%)



Cards, gift-wrap &
tags
= (0%)



Plant Care
Products
+1%



Plastic pots
+4%



Hot Drinks
+1%



Tree
decorations
= (0%)

Here we look at the price of individual barcodes transacted in garden centres in December 2023 and December 2022, to calculate a median average rate of inflation within each of the categories featured. Each month we select a 'trolley' of goods that are seasonally appropriate and track the level of price inflation. In the 12 months to December 2023, within our trolley, Spring/Summer bulb prices saw a price spike at 67%, which could be a result of heavier than usual discounting in Dec 2022.

Hardy plants (+5%), plastic pots (+4%), plant care products (+1%) and hot drinks (+1%) also experienced some level of price inflation, likely due to rising input costs. Garden tools and equipment showed no increase in prices this December. Christmas products such as Christmas trees, tree decorations and cards, gift-wrap and tags were all flat possibly due to increased competition from discount retailers putting pressure on prices, and any discounting towards the end of the month to shift stock.

Retail inflation on plants

(December 2023 vs December 2022 price inflation)



Shrubs
+2%



Foliage
houseplants
-3%



Herbaceous
+9%



Pack bedding **+14%**



Roses
+8%



Climbers **+4%**



Flowering
houseplants
-1%



Fruit trees &
bushes
+9%

Here we look at retail price inflation across some of the plant categories specifically.

Pack bedding (+14%) showed the biggest rise in prices. This was followed by high price rises in herbaceous (+9%), fruit trees and bushes (+9%) and roses (+8%). Climbers (+4%) and shrubs (+2%) also experienced price inflation. Foliage houseplants (-3%) and flowering house plants (-1%) were the only two categories seeing reduction in prices.

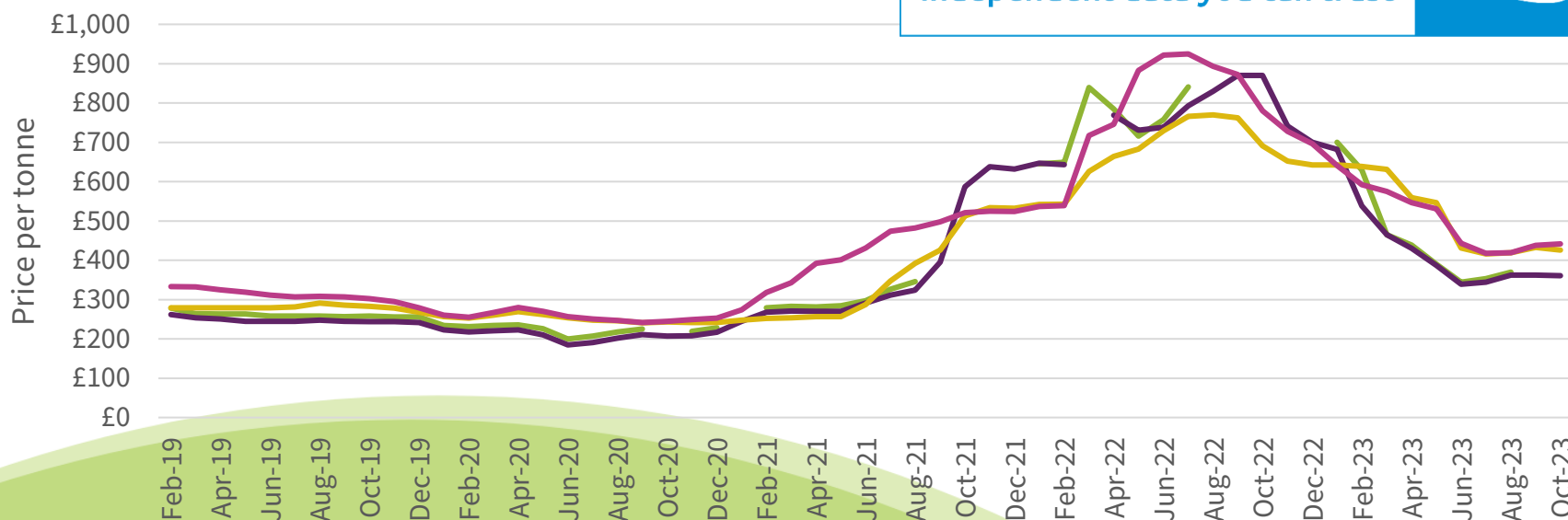
High inflation resulted in price increases for almost all categories in our trolley possibly due to higher import costs and rise in demand.

GB Fertiliser Prices

Fertilisers are a major input cost in plant production and rising prices could squeeze businesses' profit margins. Using data supplied by the AHDB, the below graph shows how straight fertiliser prices have changed since 2019. Whilst those included are not typically used in the production of container-grown ornamental crops, nor an exhaustive list of specialist compound fertilisers used by ornamental growers, the data gives a relative indication of N, P and K fertiliser price trends. We report on data from December 2023, where all components, except Liquid Urea and Ammonium Nitrate (up +1%), decreased in value compared to November 2023. The largest decrease was in Granular Urea, down -7%. All components are still considerably lower than the prices reported at the same time last year, such as Liquid Urea and Ammonium Nitrate, which was down -51% compared with December 2022.

Accurate, timely and
independent data you can trust

AHDB



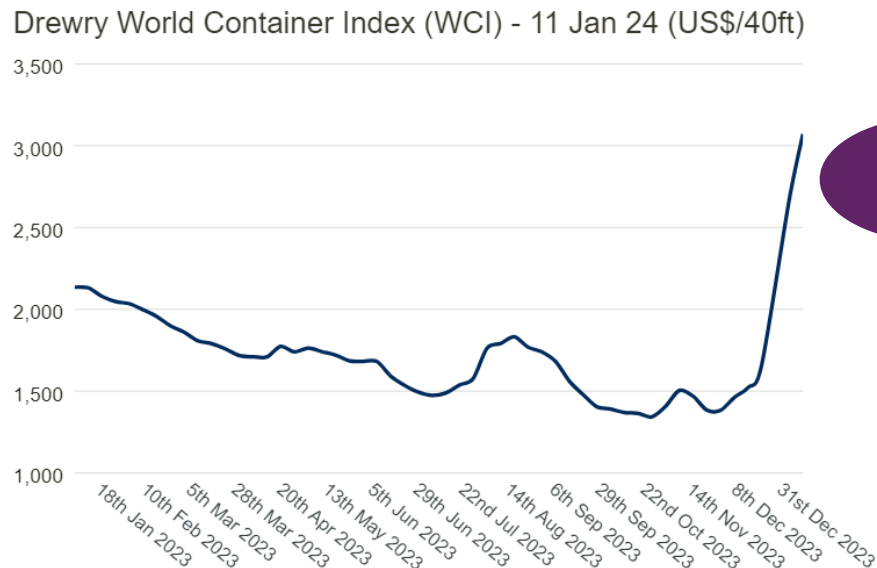
All prices are based on a price per tonne for:

- Full load
- Standard 28-day payment terms
- Bags delivered to site price
- Spot price: prices for delivery within a month (28 days)

— Ammonium Nitrate UK (34.5% N)
— Ammonium Nitrate Imported (34.5% N)
— Muriate of Potash
— Triple Super Phosphate

Shipping Container Prices

We report on a composite index which is an aggregate of shipping costs across various routes. The Drewry's World Container Index was at \$3072 for a 40ft container as of 11th Jan 2024, increasing 15% vs the week prior's value, and has increased by 44% compared to the same week of last year. Shipping supply routes were affected by disturbances in the Red Sea in November and December 2023. Companies either paused transits or took alternative routes going via the Southern tip of Africa to avoid conflict. This has added up to 2 weeks to supply journeys, increasing costs due to extra fuel usage and delaying production of goods. We also see the introduction of the EU's Emissions Trading Scheme's Emission Surcharge for container shipping, as of the 1st Jan 2024. The EMS/ESS will affect routes contact with EU ports which will also have a knock-on effect on cost of goods. We monitor the situation as the EMS/ESS is implemented and becomes more established.

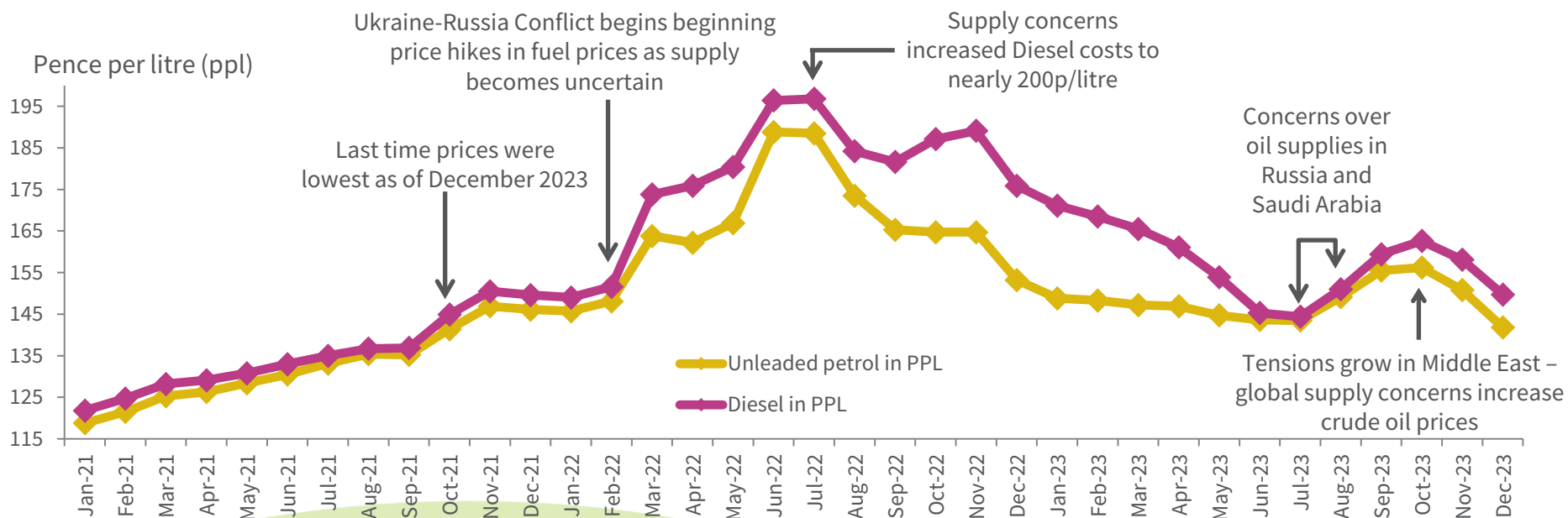


\$3072

We are reporting on the aggregate of the major shipping routes.

Vehicle fuel prices

Vehicle fuel prices are monitored monthly to gauge the situation for consumers and businesses alike. Figures reported are national averages measured in pence per litre. For further variations by region, please click the link below to view the data. The average price for petrol was 142p/litre in December 2023, and diesel dropped to 150p/litre. This equalled a decrease of 9p/litre in petrol costs and 8.4p/litre in diesel costs from November. Both costs per litre were the lowest since October 2021 as the price of crude oil fell after tensions in the middle east raised prices as a response. We also review 2023 prices below, highlighting events affecting costs.



Petrol (ppl):
142p

Diesel (ppl):
150p

[Click to view the full summary report and regional breakdowns](#)



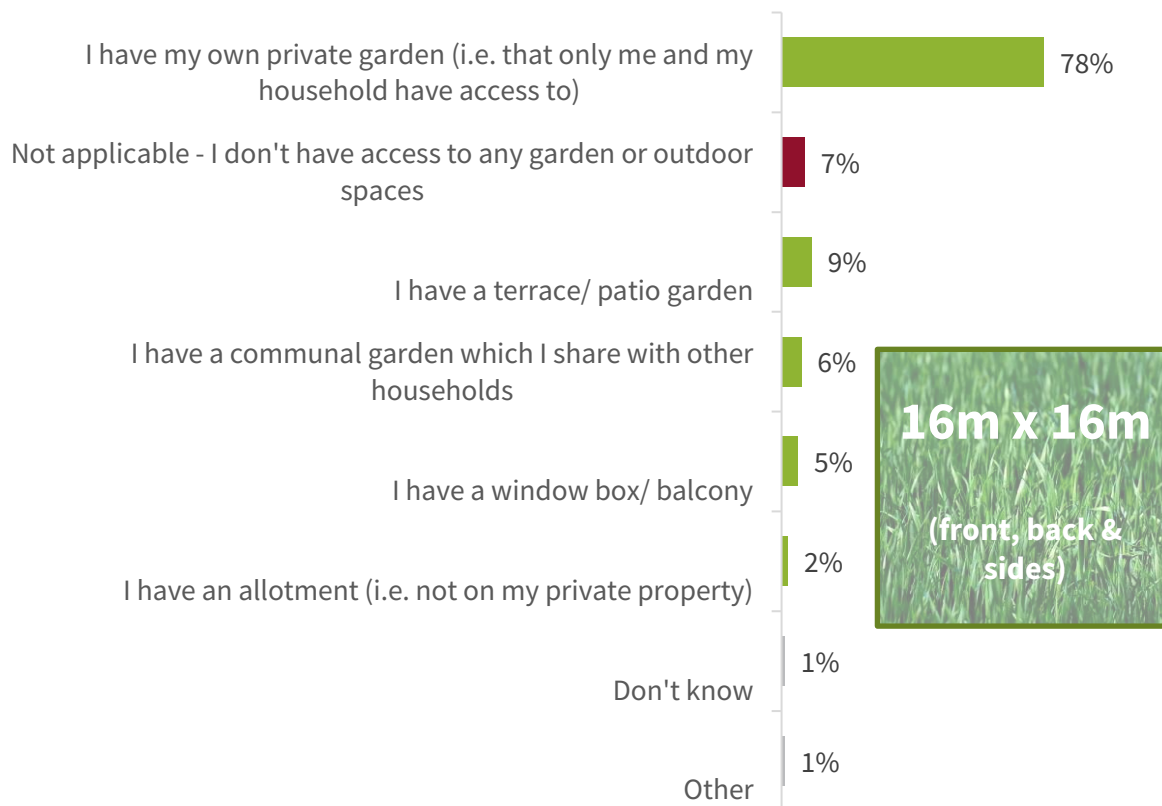
Part 2: Access to & Participation in gardening

Access to gardens

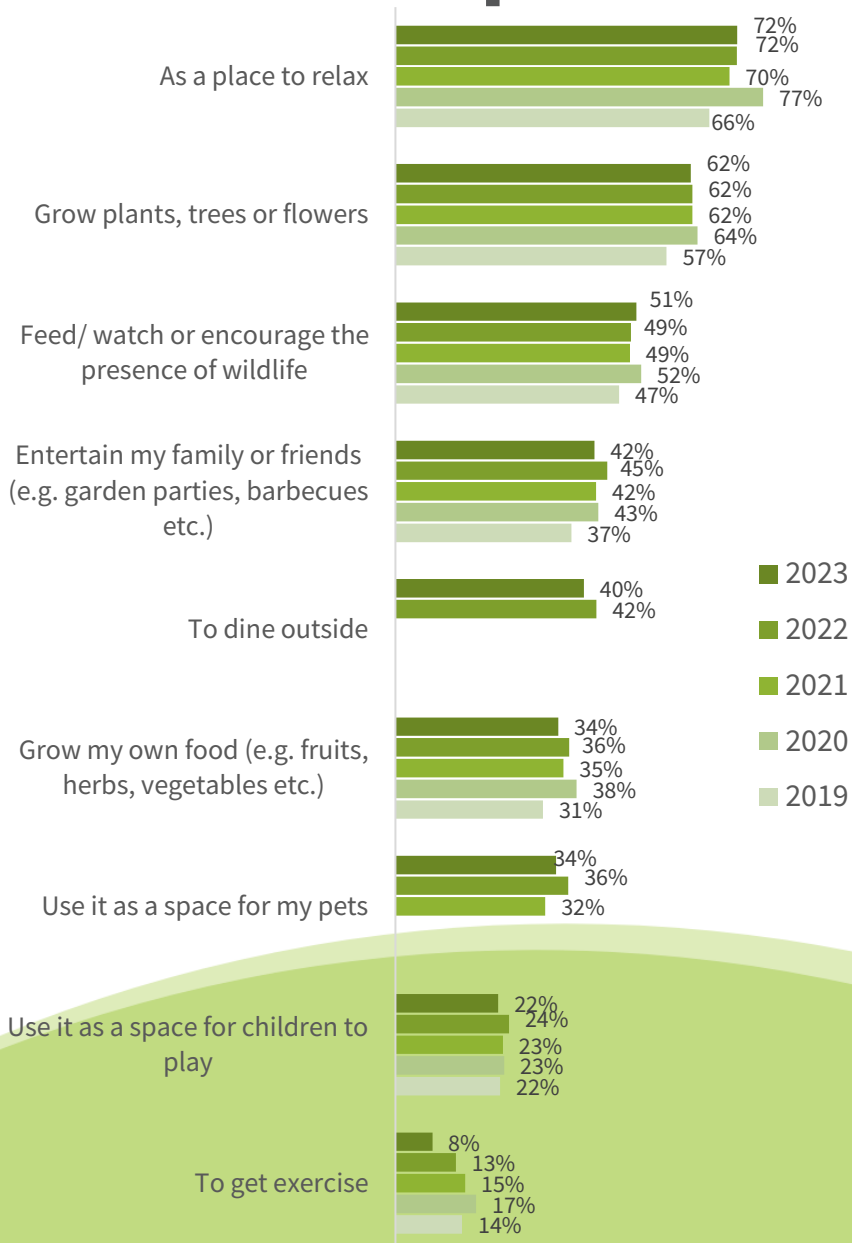
In our November 2023 consumer survey, over 9 in 10 UK adults reported having access to some kind of outdoor space for gardening. Majority of people (78%) have their own private garden, the average size (front, back and sides) of which is approximately 16 metres squared (or 258m²).

The number of people having access to private garden has remained stable over the last few years. The number of people with no access to a garden has remained stable also but with increased cost of living causing higher rents and mortgages owning own home may become more unaffordable for younger generations and this could have significant impacts on the gardening market.

Businesses may consider products and positioning that will meet the needs and challenges of renters as well as homeowners. Since, there are around 13% people with small gardening spaces (such as terrace, window box or balcony) portable solutions, or low-cost ideas for small spaces can also be attractive for these consumers.



Participation in gardening

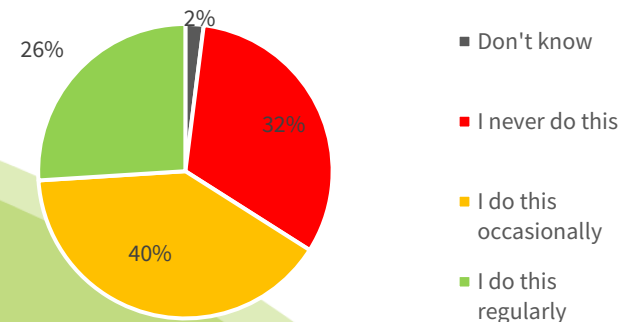


Gardening and gardens have maintained their increased appeal even after return to normalization post-COVID as our updated 2023 figures show. The November 2023 survey showed that, 26% of UK adults claimed to ‘regularly do’ gardening in their free time or as a hobby/interest, with a further 40% occasionally doing so. This rises to 62% who do regular gardening amongst those with an allotment while 31% for those who have a private garden/outdoor gardening space.

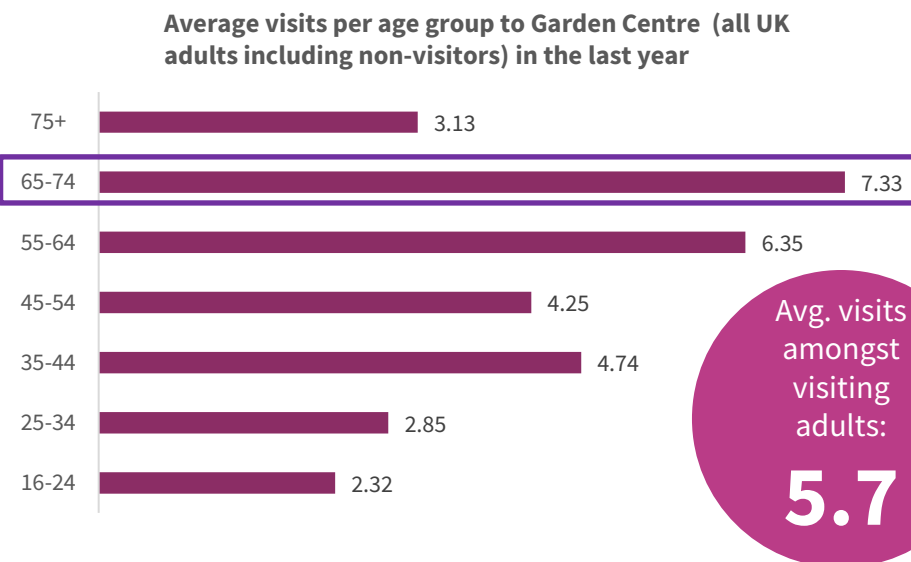
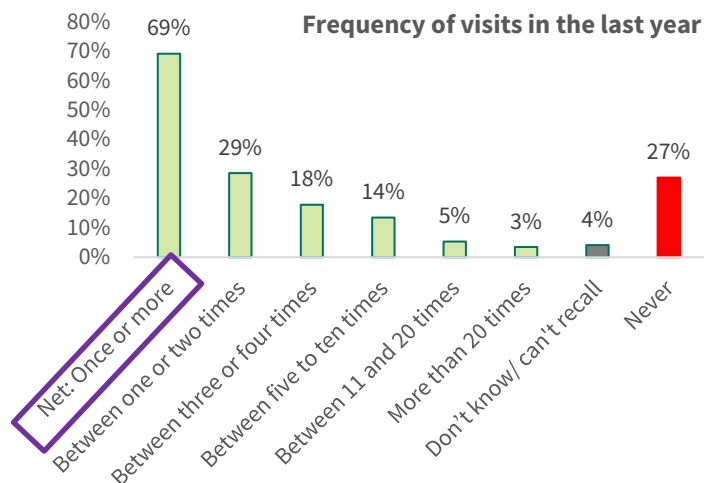
Gardening as a hobby is more common amongst older age groups, likely as work and family commitments recede to make way for additional disposable leisure time. This is evident from the data showing 45% of the people aged above 55 years voted gardening as a hobby as compared to the UK average of 28%.

Almost two thirds (62%) of UK adults with a garden/outdoor space reported using them to grow plants, trees or flowers, maintaining similar numbers as previous years and a slight reduction to 34% who reported using them to grow their own food, from 36% in 2022, but still ahead of pre-pandemic rates.

Usage of the garden as a place to relax still maintains top spot at 72%, the same level as 2022 suggesting that the physical and mental health benefits of gardens are still appreciated despite return to a largely pre-COVID work-life conditions. Birdwatching and feeding to encourage wildlife saw a slight uptick from 2022 and 2021 levels. Using the garden to entertain family and friends also remains popular.



Garden centre visits



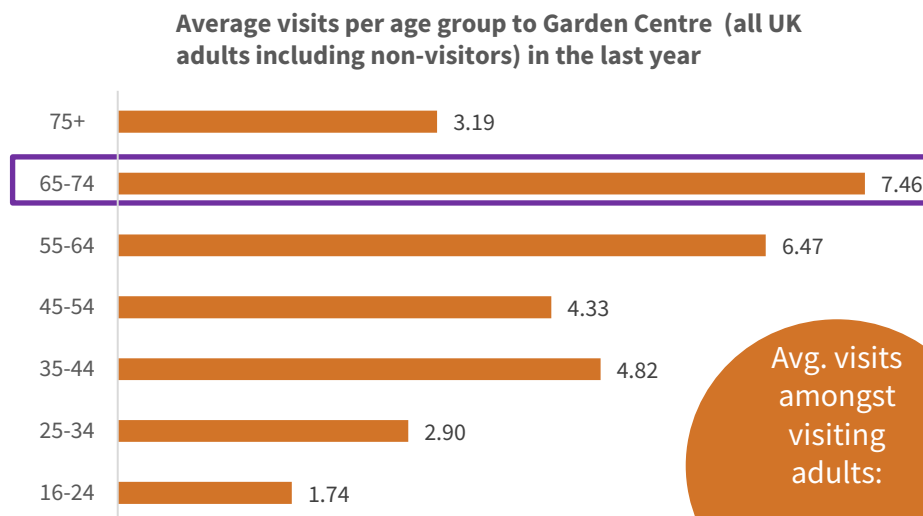
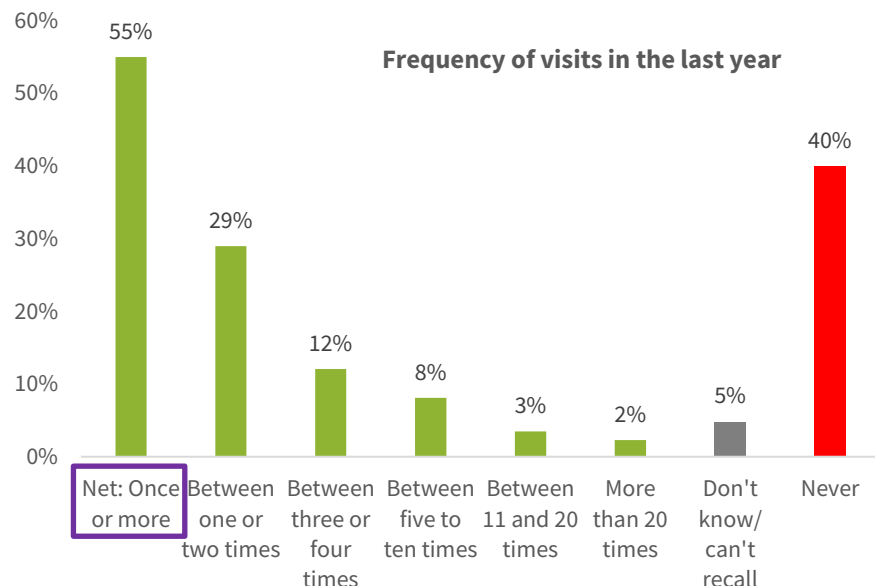
Garden centres maintained robust number of visits from the UK public, as 69% of UK adults said they visited a garden centre at least once in 2023. This is equivalent to around 38 million people visiting a Garden centre at least once.

There were an estimated 214 million visits in total to garden centres in 2023 by the UK public, highlighting the ability of garden centres to get people to physically visit a retail environment when many other sectors are seeing reduced footfall as businesses go online. These visits also create further opportunities for upselling and cross-selling. The data also shows that women (72%) were more likely to visit a garden centre than men (65%).

There were on average 3.9 visits per UK adult to a garden centre, whilst UK adults that visited at least once visited on average 5.7 times throughout the year.

Average number of visits by different age groups indicate that the 65-74 age group visit most frequently, followed by 55-64 year olds. The older age groups (55 -74) are visiting the garden centre more than three times the younger demographics (16-34) which can likely be attributed to their love of gardening and availability of free time. But importantly the data shows that visits aren't restricted solely to the older generations as visiting is spread across all the age groups.

Visits to garden centre cafés



Avg. visits amongst visiting adults:

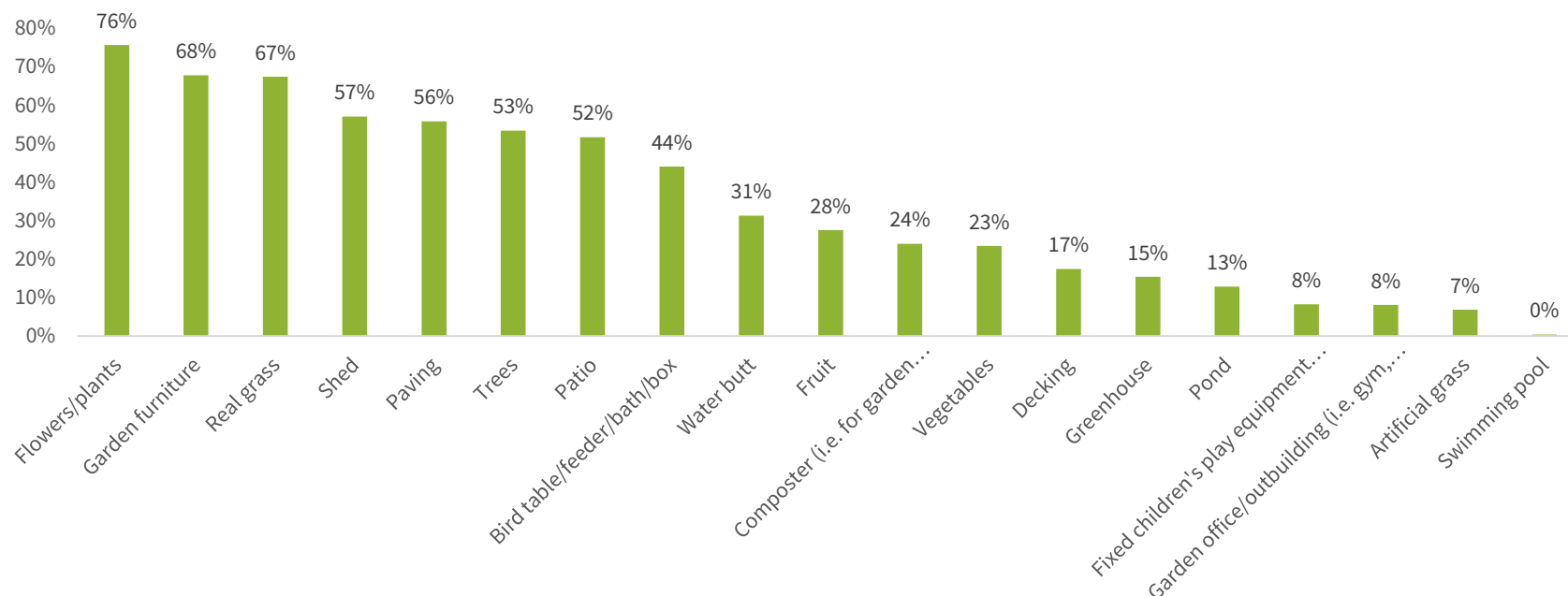
4.9

In 2023, 55% of UK adults claimed to have visited a garden centre café/restaurant at least once. This is equivalent to 30 million people visiting a garden centre cafe. This equates to approximately 149 million visits to garden centre cafes in 2023.

These numbers represent a massive opportunity for the garden centres in promoting their cafes, food and beverages and creating promotional offers in store around the café visits. Women (58%) are more likely to visit garden centre cafes than men (51%) in-line with the trend for garden centre visiting overall. There were 2.7 visits on average per UK adult to garden centre cafes/restaurants, whilst UK adults that visited at least once visited on average 4.9 times throughout the year.

Average number of visits to café by different age groups are similar to the garden centre visiting profile. There is a slight uptick in café visits by the older age groups 55-74. This creates opportunity to tailor bespoke events, food and promotional days to these age groups as the core audience.

Contents of the garden



As shown on page 35, our gardens are used for a variety of different purposes and as such their contents differ. As expected, most gardens have flowers/plants (76%), garden furniture (68%) and real grass (67%).

The interest in sustainable gardening is evident by water butts (31%), and composters (24%) featuring in around a quarter to one third of private gardens. There has been a slight downtick in the vegetables grown (23% compared to 27% in 2022) which may be attributed to the unpredictable weather in 2023.

Closing comments

We hope you enjoyed the format and content of this Market Update.

If you have any questions or would like to see something else included, please don't hesitate to contact marketinfo@hta.org.uk

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