

This is the latest monthly summary of data from the Citizens Advice network in Scotland since the COVID-19 outbreak and covers March 2022. It shows data from the 59 Citizens Advice Bureaux in Scotland and our online advice site.

## Month in focus:

Demand for advice across the network shows the growing concern around the cost of living crisis with demand in some cases now higher than during the pandemic.

In terms of online advice pages, Concern around landlords increasing rent continues to grow and is now **8 times** higher than at the start of the pandemic. In March alone page views saw a **48%** increase. Preliminary 12 month data from across the CAB network suggests that demand for housing related advice is now actually higher as a proportion of advice than it was before the pandemic.

In addition to this, page views for online advice around food banks and crisis support now almost double that of March 2021.

Preliminary 12 month data for advice provided by Citizens Advice Bureaux also suggest demand for debt advice is close to pre-pandemic levels. Meanwhile demand for advice around utilities – namely energy – is actually now higher than before the pandemic, representing over **5%** of all advice now compared to **3.3%** before the pandemic.

This is the final monthly data report before we observe the impact of the energy price cap increase in April 2022 on demand for advice, but concern around the cost of living has clearly been growing significantly among people seeking advice for months.

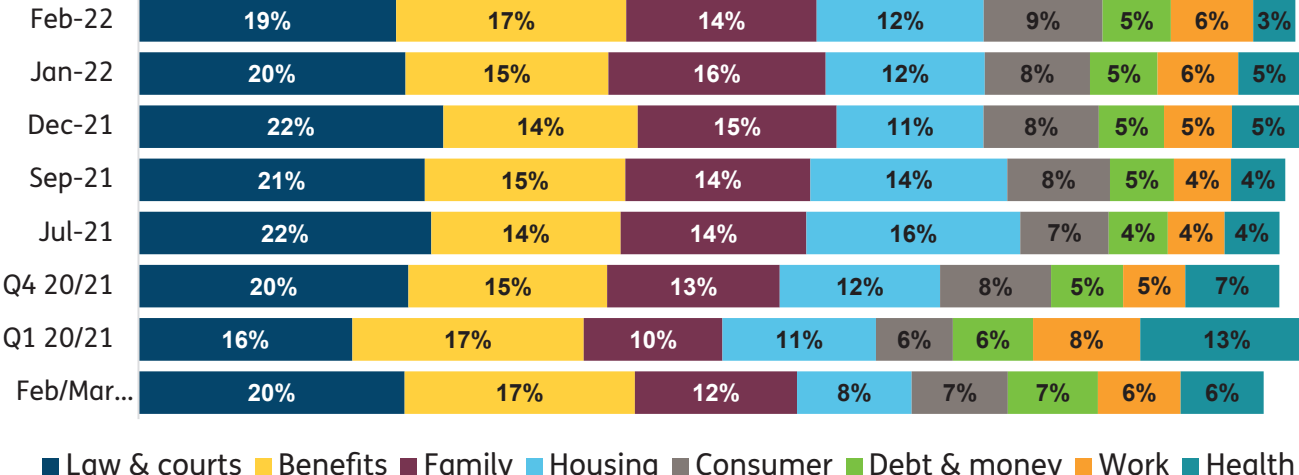
## Key points

- > In March 2022 Citizens Advice Bureaux network helped **23,722** clients with **93,368** pieces of advice.
- > Meanwhile the Advice for Scotland website had **233,136** users, generating **392,733** unique page views.

## Advice for Scotland website

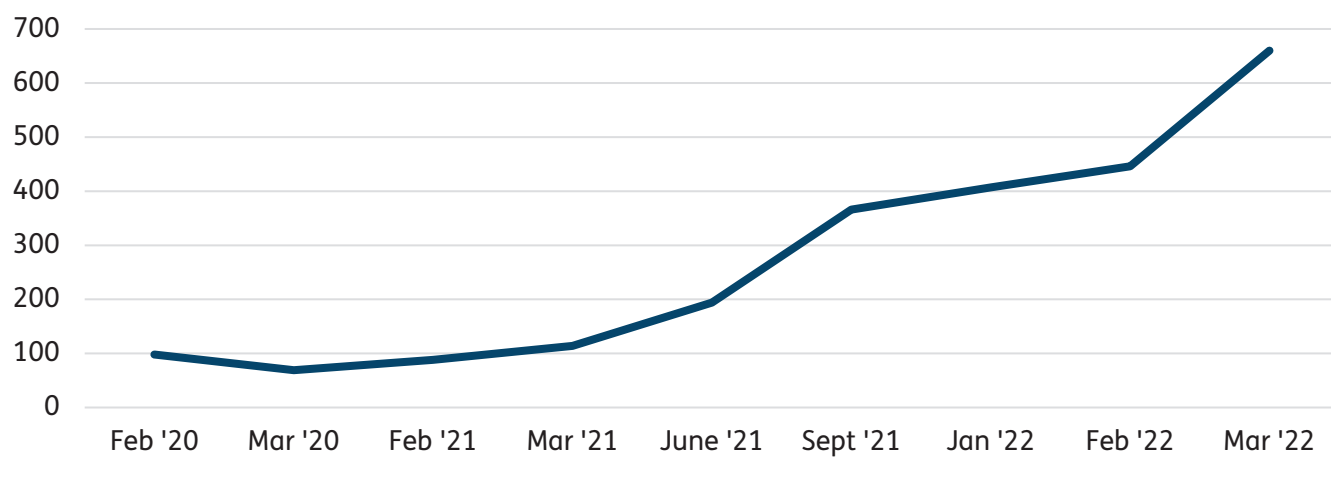
Trend data for visits to the Advice for Scotland website, as a proportion of all unique page views on the site, show some variation between February and March 2022, with a further increase in unique page views of webpages relating to benefits advice of **12%** (having increased by **13%** between January and February 2022).

Advice sought on the 'Advice for Scotland' website, as a proportion of all advice



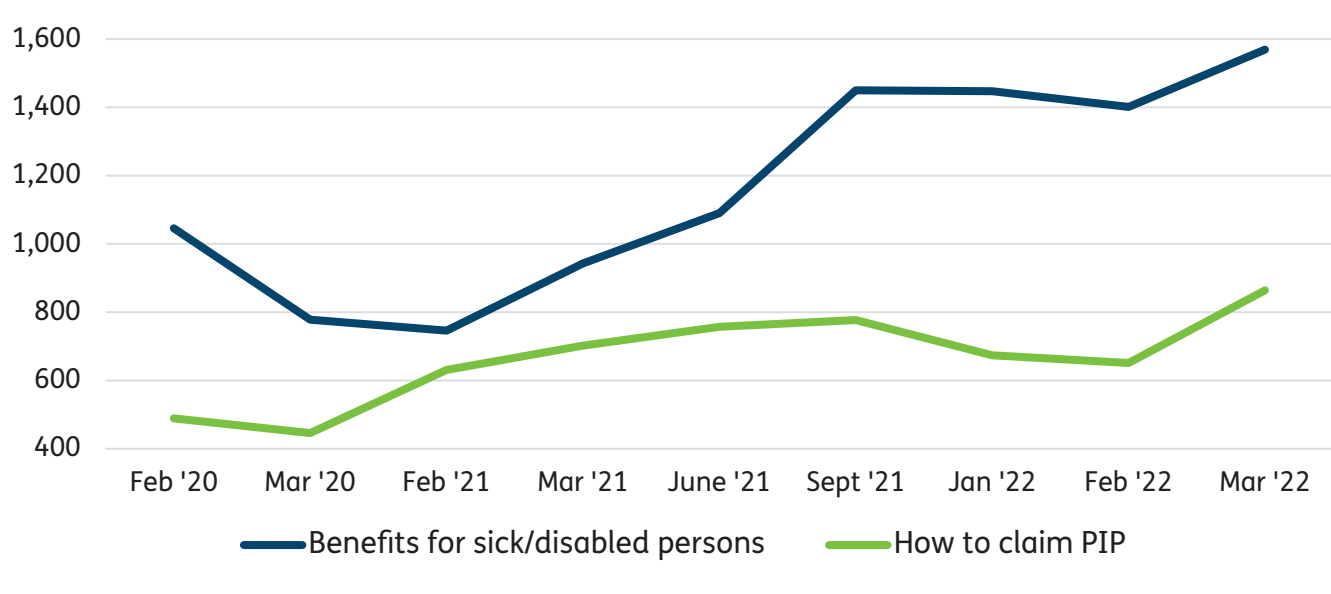
Concern regarding landlords increasing rent was evident again during March 2022, increasing by **48%** from February 2022, having already increased by **16%** the previous month. The current unique page views for this topic are more than eight times higher than they were at the start of the pandemic in March 2020.

Unique page views: landlord wants to increase rent



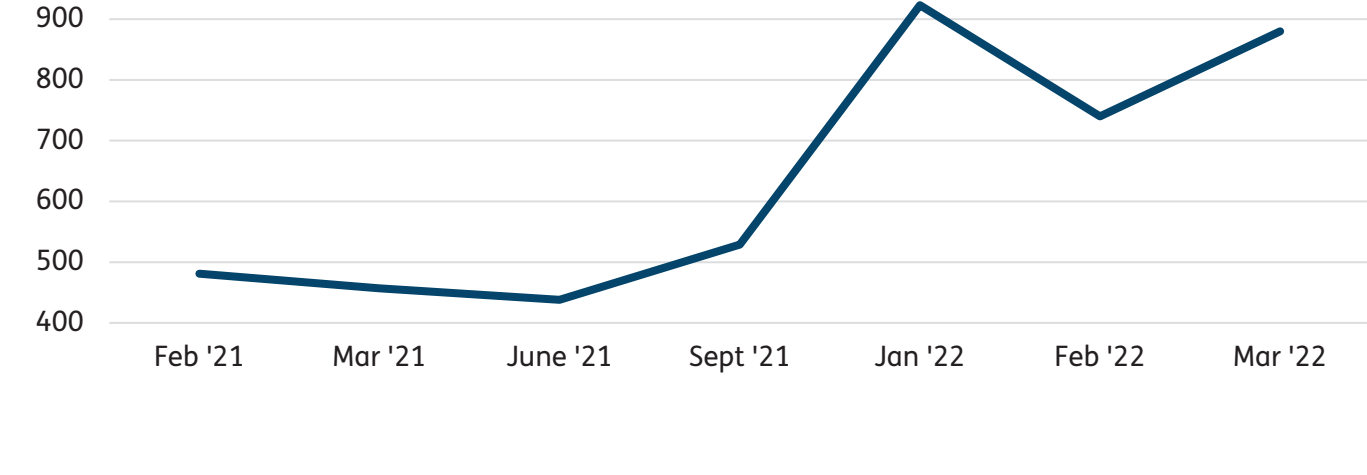
Advice relating to benefits for sick or disabled persons also saw a sharp increase during March 2022, with that unique page views for the general page increasing by **12%** and for claiming Personal Independence Payment increasing by **33%**. Again, both of these pages have seen a considerable increase in unique page views across the pandemic period as they have essentially doubled during that time.

Benefits for sick or disabled persons



Although not as high as its peak in January 2022, unique pages views relating to advice on food banks and other crisis help have shown a considerable increase across the past 12 months, with these views currently being almost double (up **93%**) from March 2021.

Food banks and other crisis help

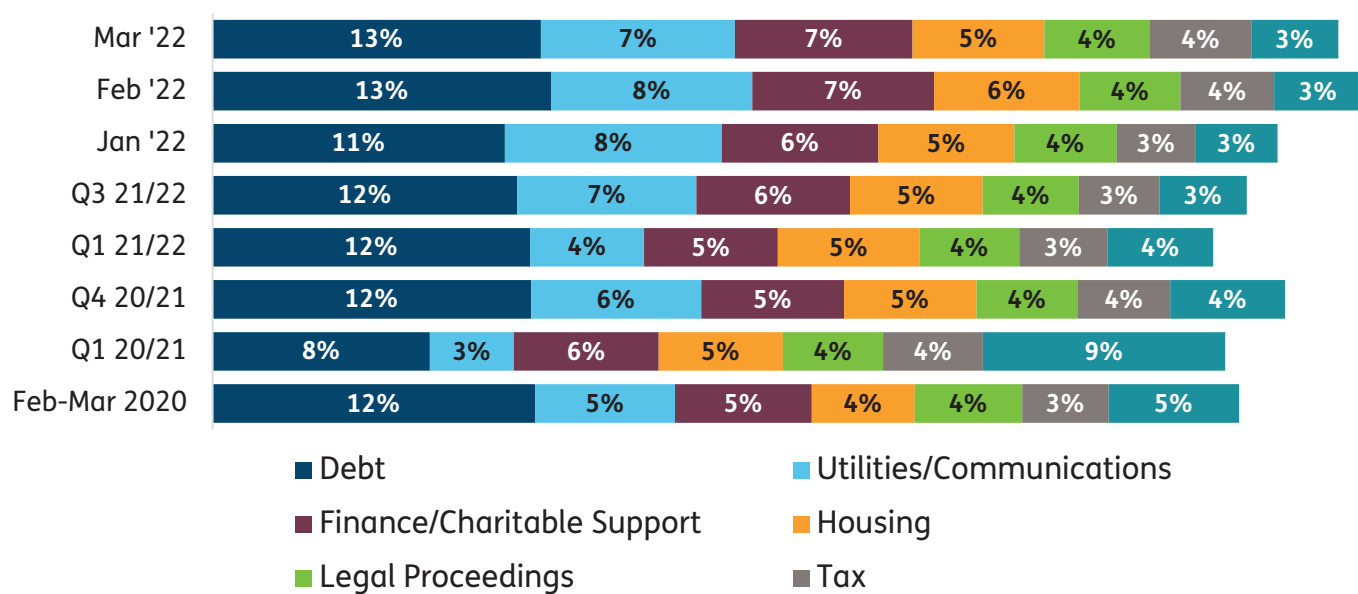


## Demand for advice across the CAB network

- > **23,722 clients**
- > **93,368 pieces of advice**

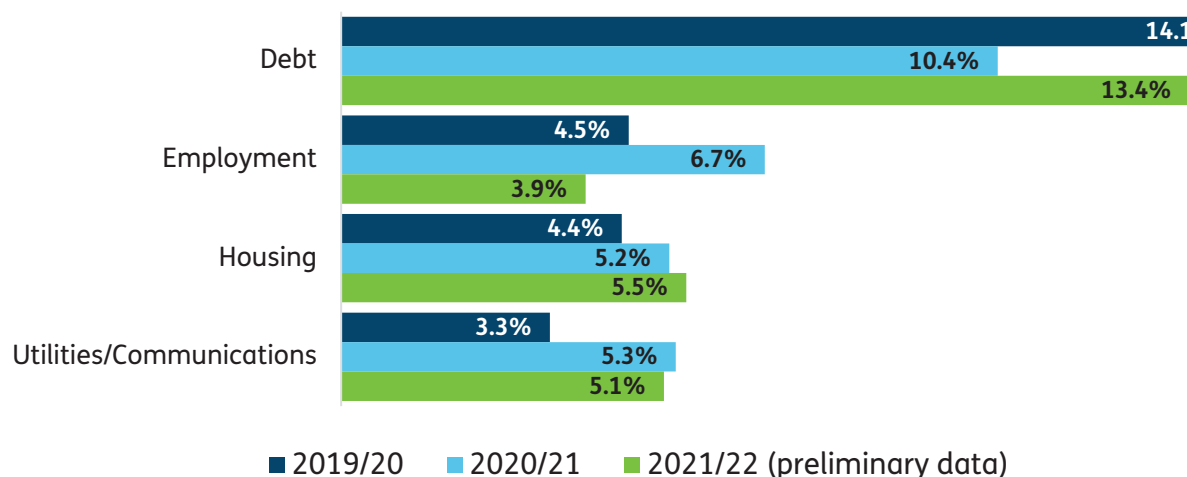
Benefits remained the top advice area in March 2022 at **46%** of all advice. There were no notable changes from February to March 2022; however, the chart below does demonstrate significant changes over the pandemic period in some cases. For example, advice in relation to Utilities/Communications (which is primarily energy-related advice) shows a considerable increase while current levels of employment-related advice are lower than for the pre-pandemic period, and one-third of the volume at their peak in Q1 of 2020/21.

Top advice areas, as a proportion of all advice (excluding benefits)



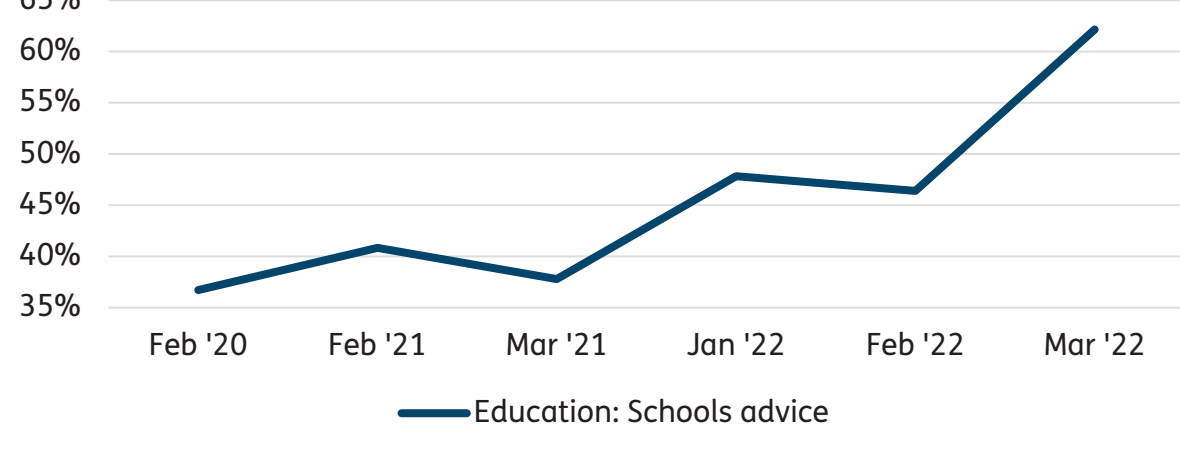
Preliminary figures for 2021/22 allow some consideration of changes in advice need across the previous three years. As can be seen in the chart below, following a considerable decline in need during 2020/21 the need for debt advice is now close to pre-pandemic levels having seen an increase in demand during February and March 2022. The peak in need for employment-related advice is also evident, as are the increases in demand for advice in relation to housing and utilities/communications.

Advice need variation 2019 to 2022, as a proportion of all advice



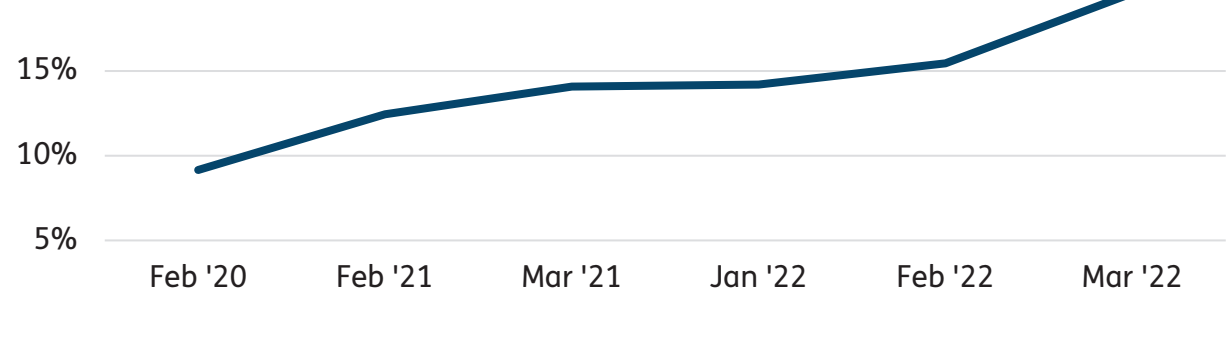
Advice in relation to schools, which includes such as admissions; exclusions; and special needs, saw a sharp increase (up **34%**) during March 2022. In addition, the need for this type of advice is currently **69%** higher than it was pre-pandemic.

Education: Schools advice



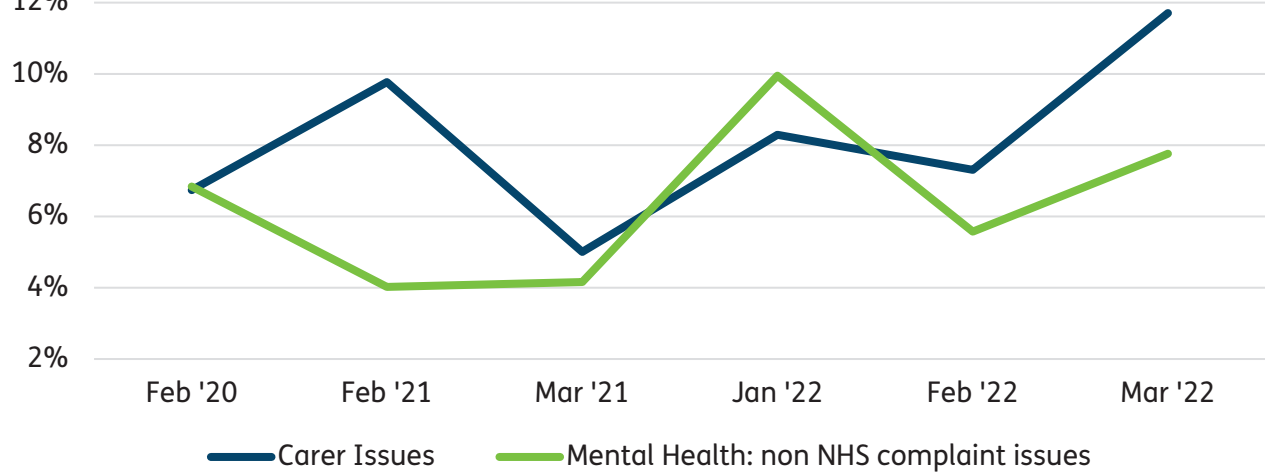
Similarly, there has been a steady rise in the need for advice in relation to public transport, with this having increased by **27%** between February and March 2022. At present, the demand for public transport advice has also more than doubled (up **113%**) since the pre-pandemic period.

Public transport advice



Although the pattern here is less distinct, March 2022 also saw a sharp increase in advice relating to carer issues (up **60%**) and non-NHS mental health complaints (up **39%**). While demand for the latter is currently around pre-pandemic levels, advice need in relation to carer issues has increased by 74% over the time period.

Changes in selected health-related advice



While a decrease of **11%** from February to March 2022 is evident, it is clear that the overall need for immigration advice in relation family, dependents and partners is also currently in excess of that seen prior to the pandemic, with levels during March 2022 almost 3.5 times higher (up **173%**) from February 2020.

Immigration: Family, dependents & partners advice

