

**Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS), our 59-member Citizen Advice Bureaux (CAB) and the Extra Help Unit (EHU), form Scotland's largest independent advice network. Scotland's Citizens Advice Network is an essential community service that empowers people through our local bureaux and national services by providing free, confidential and independent advice.**

**We use people's real-life experiences to influence policy and drive positive change. We are on the side of people in Scotland who need help and we change lives for the better. During 2022-23, the Citizens Advice network provided advice and assistance to over 187,000 people. The network putting over £142 million back into people's pockets during this time, with every £1 invested in core advice funding returning £14 in gains for people.**

**This is the latest monthly summary of data from the Citizens Advice network in Scotland and covers December 2023. It shows data from the 59 Citizens Advice Bureaux in Scotland and our online advice site.**

### **Month in Focus**

December is historically a quieter month for advice demand due to public holidays. Despite that, Citizens Advice Bureaux (CABs) helped more people with more issues compared to December 2022 with over 18,000 people getting advice across 70,000 issues.

The types of advice trends seen across the network since December 2022 shows the ongoing impact of the cost-of-living crisis. Increasing numbers of people are turning up to a CAB in either debt or in crisis – or both.

Advice relating to debt rose by 4% from December 2022 to December 2023, and across the same period, advice in relation to debt to an energy supplier is up by 8%.

Meanwhile, advice pertaining to the Crisis Grant from the Scottish Welfare Fund is up 37% from December 2022 to December 2023.

Online, there was a 50% increase in views of advice around Council Tax and an 11% increase in demand for advice on benefits.

Policy makers need to understand these trends show that the cost-of-living crisis has not gone away, and will leave a legacy of debt, destitution and increasing demand on essential services like CABs.



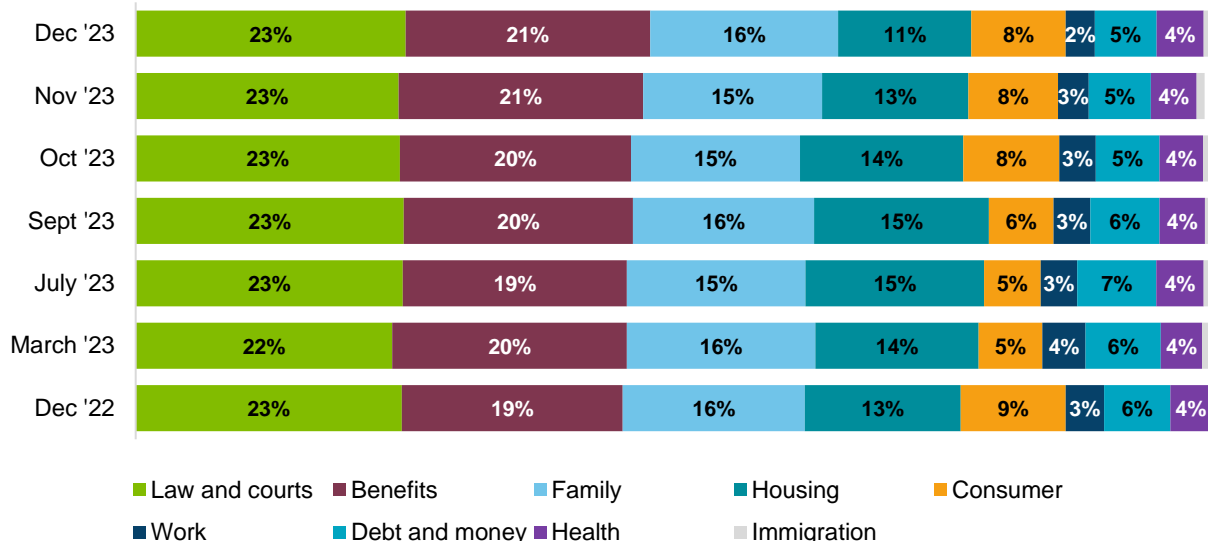
## Webpages

**279,490** views (down 22% from November 2023)

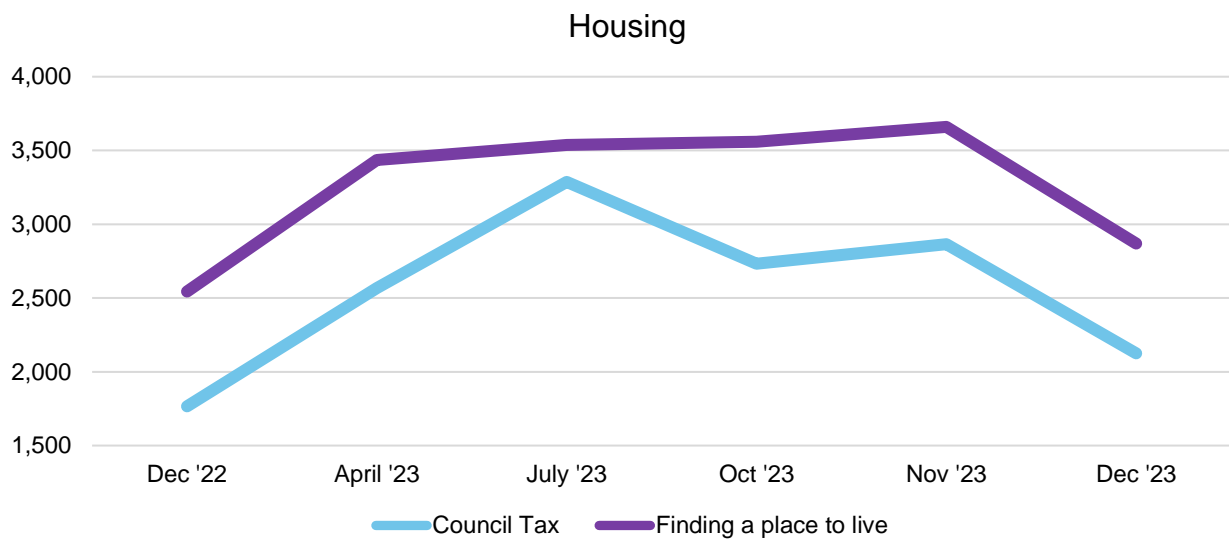
From November to December 2023, views in relation to pages providing Law and courts advice remained stable, with a slight 3% increase, with views pertaining to pages advising on Benefits remaining completely stable. The only notable changes from November 2023 to December 2023 included: pages relating to advice on Housing decreasing by 9% and pages relating to advice on immigration increasing by 20%.

Longer-term notable changes include an 11% increase for views in relation to pages providing Benefits advice, from December 2022 to December 2023. Furthermore, views relating to pages advising on Housing decreased by 14% from December 2022 to December 2023, and views in relation to pages providing Consumer advice decreased by 10% from December 2022 to December 2023. Views on pages relating to Work advice decreased by 24% from December 2022 to December 2023; views relating to pages providing advice on Health increased by 15% from December 2022 to December 2023; and views in relation to pages advising on Immigration decreased by 12% during the same period.

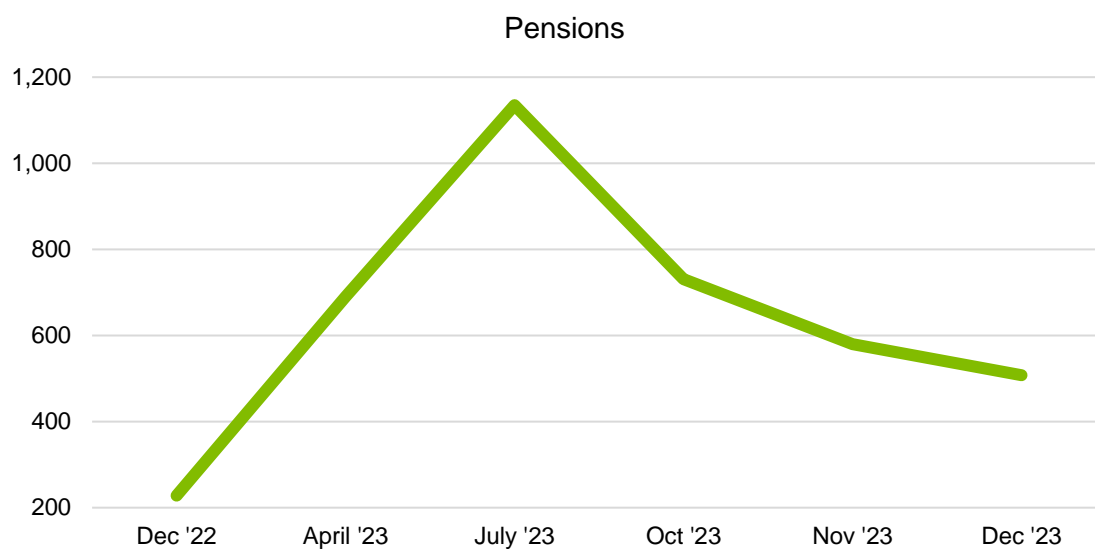
Advice sought on the 'Advice for Scotland' website, as a proportion of all advice



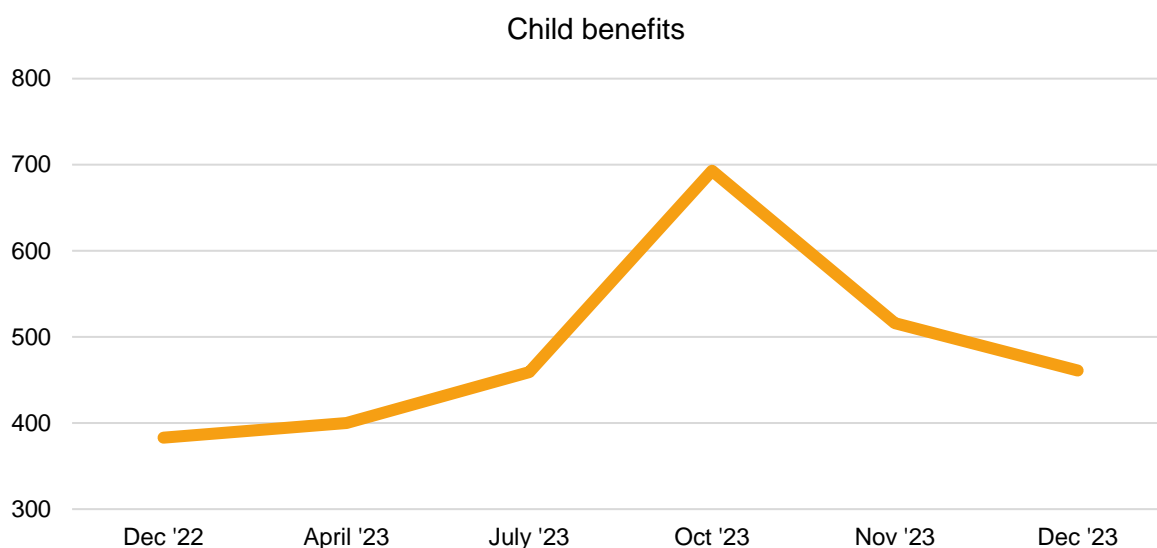
Views on pages regarding housing-related advice on Council Tax increased by 5% from November 2023 to December 2023, and by 50% from December 2022 to December 2023. Views on pages pertaining to Housing advice on finding a place to live also increased from November 2023 to December 2023 by 11%, having increased by 41% from December 2022 to December 2023.



Views on pages regarding Pensions increased by 14% from November 2023 to December 2023, and by 156% from December 2022 to December 2023.



Views on pages relating to Child Benefits increased by 15% from November to December 2023, and by 16% from December 2022 to December 2023.



### CAB network statistics

**70,583** pieces of advice (up 2% from December 2022)

**18,292** clients (up 3% from December 2022)

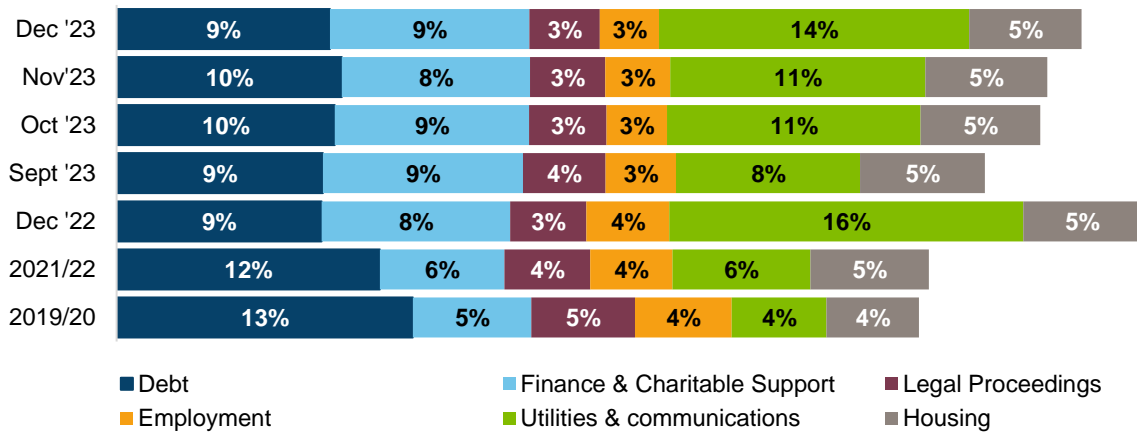
The top advice area in December 2023 continued to be Benefits, remaining stable at 44% of all advice provided. Advice on Utilities and Communications increased by 22% from November 2023 to December 2023, accounting for 14% of all advice provided. However, advice pertaining to Utilities and Communications is down by 12% from December 2022 to December 2023.

Debt made up 9% of all advice provided in December 2023, with advice on Debt decreasing by 5% from November to December 2023. However, advice relating to Debt rose by 4% from December 2022 to December 2023. Furthermore, advice in relation to Housing decreased by 8% from November to December 2023 and advice on Finance and Charitable support increased by 6% during the same period.

The only other notable change in the top advice areas was advice in relation to Employment decreasing by 9% from November to December 2023, and by 29% from December 2022 to December 2023.

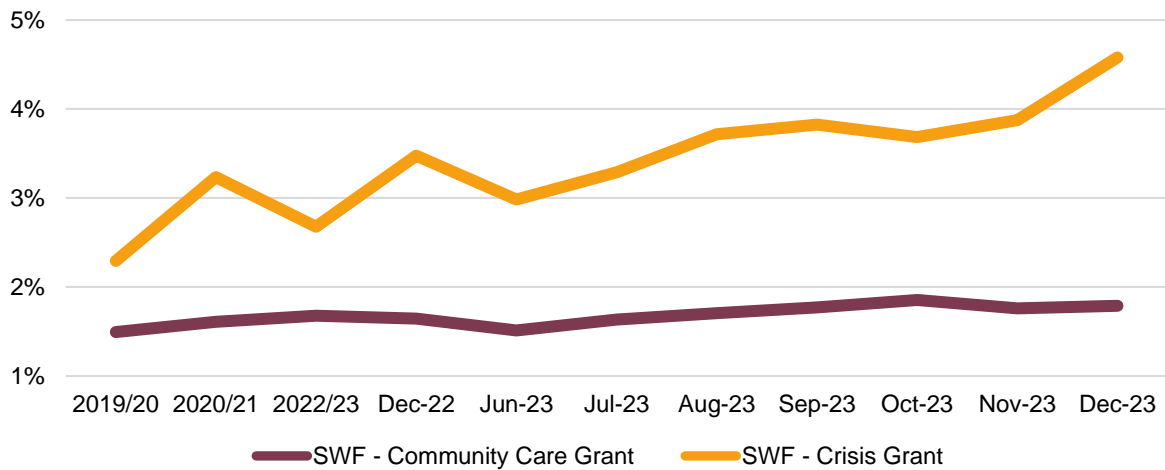


Top advice areas, as a proportion of all advice (excluding benefits)

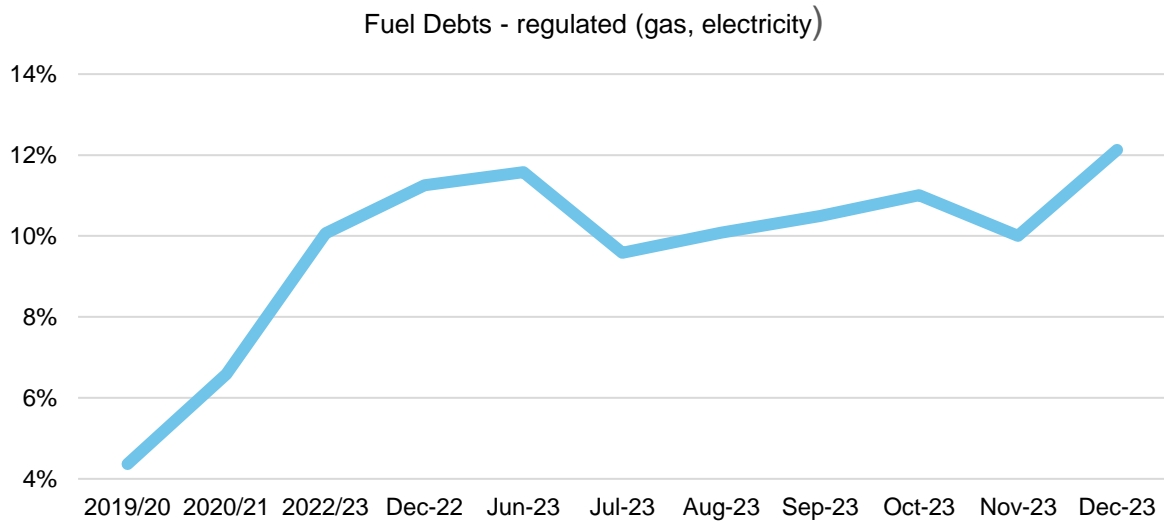


Advice relating to both types of Scottish Welfare Fund grants increased from November to December 2023, with advice pertaining to the Community Care Grant increasing by 2%, and advice in relation to the Crisis Grant increasing by 21%. Advice relating to the Community Care Grant is thereby up 13% from December 2022 to December 2023, with. This indicates people turning to the grants as the cost of living crisis continues and people continue to struggle financially.

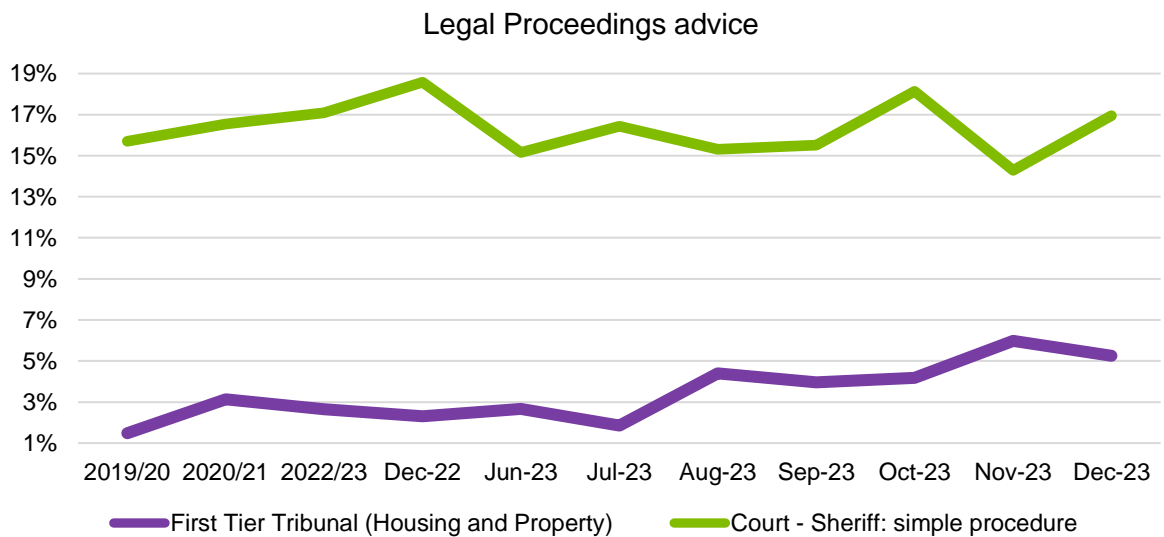
Scottish Welfare Fund grants



Advice in relation to Fuel Debts increased by 21% from November 2023 to December 2023, with a long-term increase evident, as advice concerning Fuel Debts increased by 8% from December 2022 to December 2023. This is indicative of the continuing struggles people face, as Winter sets in, with paying their energy bills, due to sky-rocketing costs and continued increases in the Energy Price Cap.



Advice relating to Housing and Property First Tier Tribunal decreased by 12% from November 2023 to December 2023, likely due to seasonal variances in court opening times. However, although it is worth noting that the figures for this advice code are small, advice pertaining to Housing and Property First Tier Tribunal has increased by 128% from December 2022 to December 2023, perhaps reflecting the impact of the eviction ban and rent cap, and tenants seeking to enforce these rights. Advice in relation to Simple Procedure increased by 19% from November 2023 to December 2023, having peaked at its highest level in October 2023. Advice relating to Simple Procedure is down 9% from December 2022 to December 2023.





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[www.cas.org.uk](http://www.cas.org.uk)

The Scottish Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux - Citizens Advice Scotland. Scottish charity (SC016637) and company limited by guarantee (89892)

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