

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 November 2023. It shows data from the 59 Citizens Advice Bureaux in Scotland and our online advice site.

Month in Focus

In November 2023, CABs helped over 24,000 people, giving over 103,000 pieces of advice. This is a 4% increase in client numbers compared to November 2022. Meanwhile, online advice pages received over 359,000 unique page views (UPVs).

Online, demand for advice on scams remained stable from October 2023 to November 2023. However, views for these pages have increased by 78% from November 2022.

Across the CAB network, there were several increases linked to the cost-of-living crisis.

Fuel Vouchers accounted for 21% of all regulated fuels advice in November 2023. This is a 105% increase from November 2021, indicating how clients across the country are struggling to pay fuel bills due to the rise in the energy price cap.

Meanwhile, demand for Food Insecurity advice has increased by 43% from November 2021.

Finally, priority debts made up 41% of all debt advice in November 2023. More and more people are falling behind on essential bills, as the pressure on household budgets, caused by the cost-of-living crisis, continues.



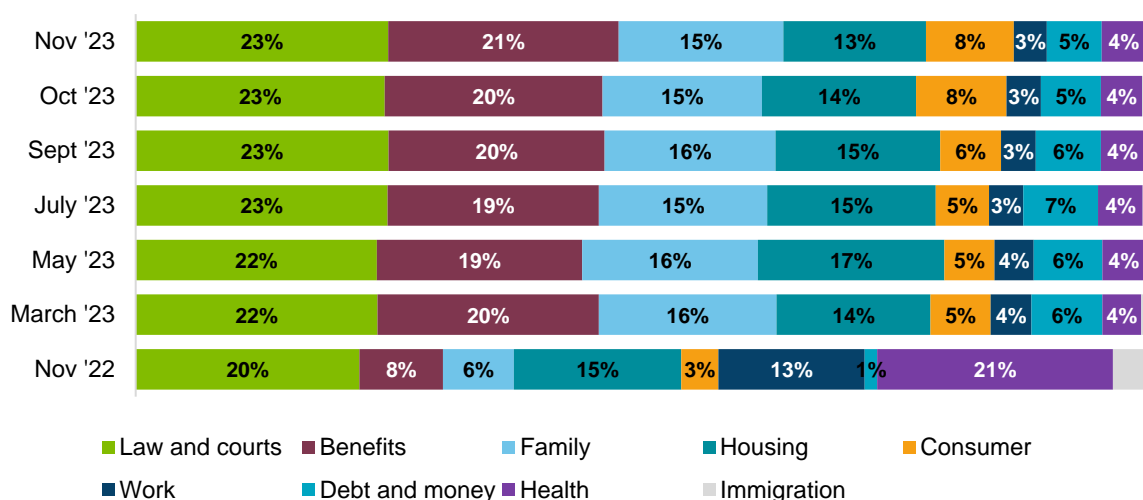
Webpages

359,128 views

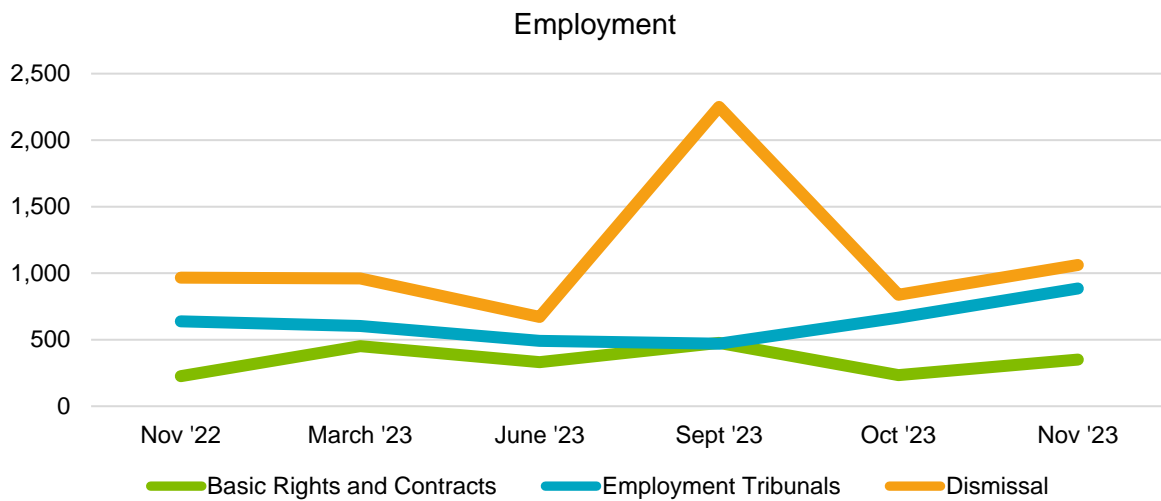
From October to November 2023, views in relation to pages providing advice on consumer issues decreased by 11%, compared to a 49% increase last month. Views on pages providing advice on housing decreased by 15% from October to November 2023, with views on pages relating to advice on work decreasing by 20% for the same period.

Longer-term notable changes include a 21% decrease for views in relation to pages providing advice on Debt and Money, from November 2022 to November 2023; a 10% decrease in views for pages relating to housing advice from November 2022 to November 2023; a 36% decrease for pages providing advice in relation to work; and views for pages relating to Health advice increasing by 11% from November 2022 to November 2023. Page views of advice relating to immigration showed the largest decrease once more, down 42% from November 2022.

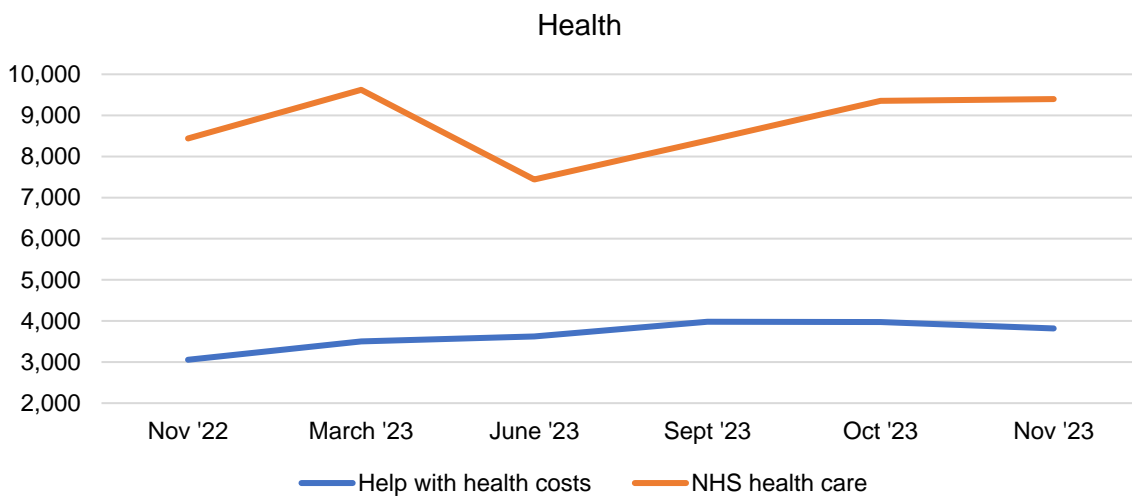
Advice sought on the 'Advice for Scotland' website, as a proportion of all advice



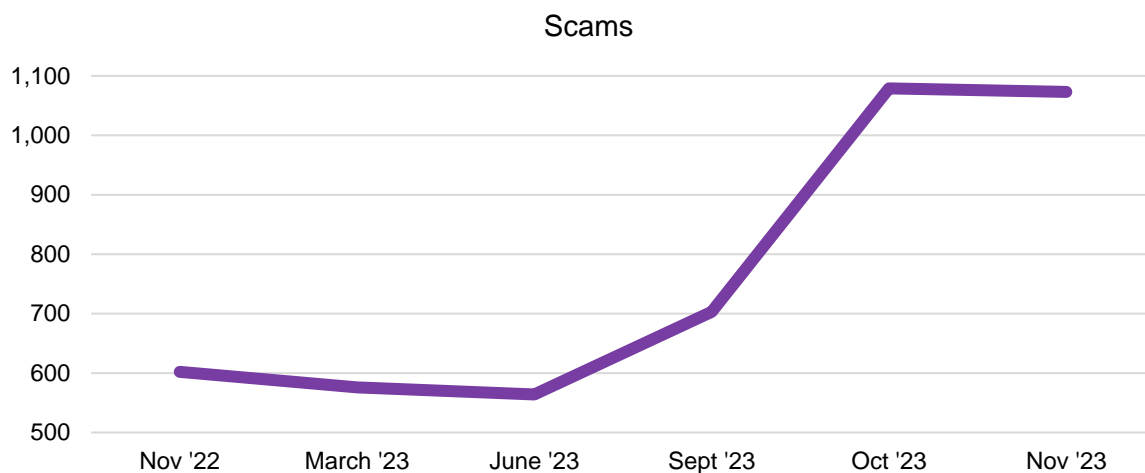
Pages regarding work-related advice on Basic Rights and Contracts increased 50% from October to November 2023 and by 55% from November 2022 to November 2023. Pages in relation to advice on Employment Tribunals increased by 33% from October to November 2023 and by 39% from November 2022 to November 2023. Pages providing advice relating to Dismissal saw an increase of 42% from October to November 2023, but an overall decrease of 10% from November 2022 to November 2023.



Views for pages relating to Health advice increased by 11% from November 2022 to November 2023, with views for pages in relation to help with health costs increasing by 25% during this period. Views for pages pertaining to NHS healthcare also increased from November 2022 to November 2023, by 11%.



Furthermore, views for pages in relation to advice on scams remained stable in November 2023, decreasing by just 1% from October 2023. However, views on these pages have increased by 78% from November 2022 to November 2023.



CAB network statistics

103,516 pieces of advice (up 7% from November 2022)

24,382 clients (up 4% from November 2022)

The top advice area in November 2023 continued to be benefits, remaining stable at 45% of all advice provided. Advice on Utilities and Communications was also stable, having increased by 1% from October 2023, up by 22% from November 2022. Advice in relation to NHS Concern or Complaint continued to increase, by 14% from October 2023, although it is down 13% since November 2022.

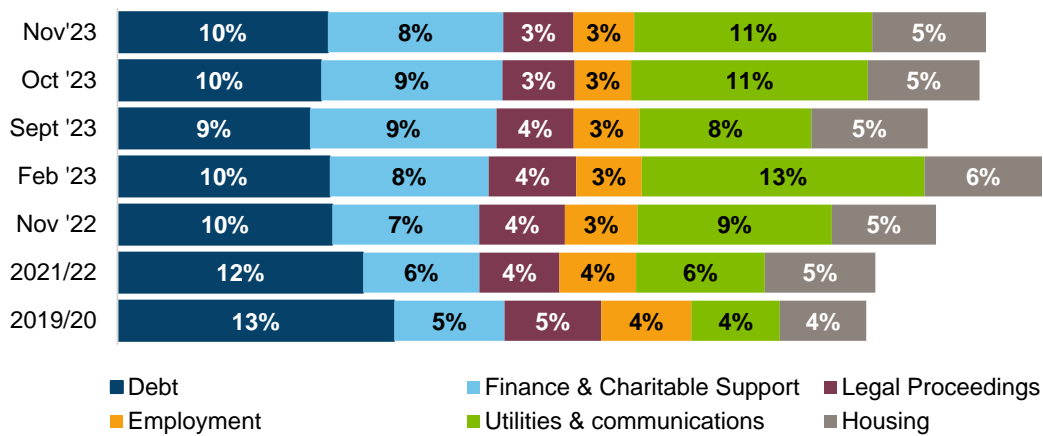
Advice pertaining to Health and Community Care increased by 11% from October 2023 and by 15% from November 2022, and advice around Employment saw another increase this month, rising by 7% from October 2023, although it is down 16% from November 2022.

Advice in relation to Finance & Charitable support is marginally down 3% since October 2023, however, it has increased by 19% since November 2022. Advice around Legal Proceedings is down by a small percentage, 3%, from October 2023, but has notably decreased by 18% from November 2022.

Furthermore, advice provided on Housing has remained relatively stable, with an increase of 2% from October 2023, however, it has increased by 9% from November 2022. There were no other notable changes.



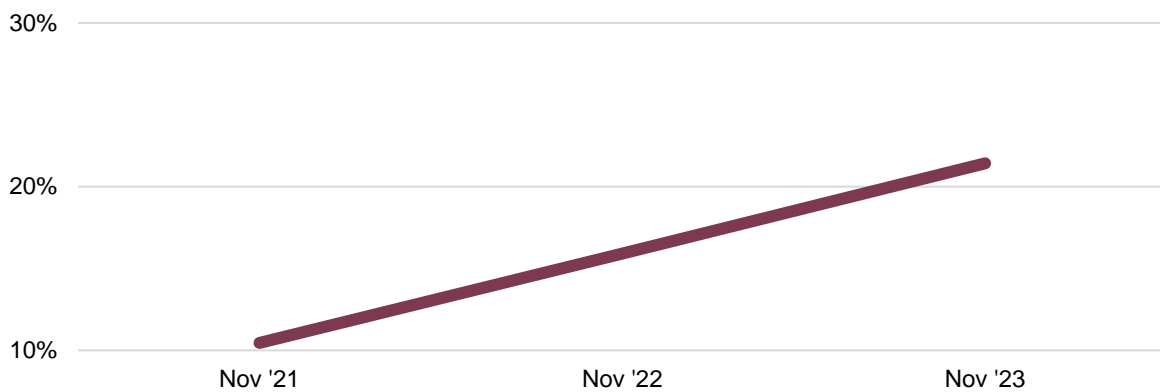
Top advice areas, as a proportion of all advice (excluding benefits)



As we approach Winter, the Research Team has taken a slightly differently approach to analysing the advice code data for November.

As a percentage of all regulated fuels advice, Fuel Vouchers have increased year-on-year from November 2021. Whilst in November 2021, Fuel Vouchers accounted for 10% of all regulated fuels advice provided, this number increased to 16% in November 2022, further increasing to accounting for 21% of all regulated fuels advice in November 2023. Thus, a 105% increase from November 2021 to November 2023, indicating the growth and sustained experience of clients across the country struggling to pay fuel bills, as costs have skyrocketed due to the rise in price cap.

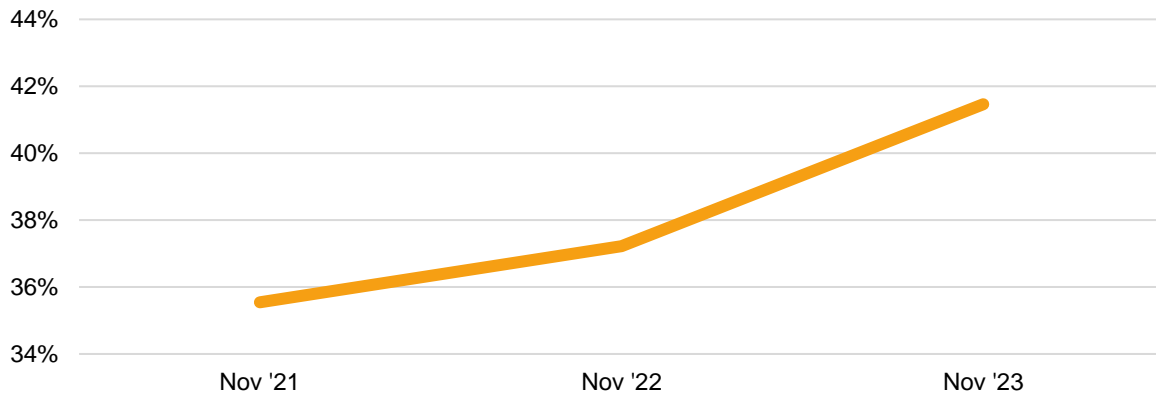
Fuel Vouchers as a percentage of all regulated fuels advice



Furthermore, advice on priority debts as a percentage of all debt advice, has increased each year since November 2021. Accounting for 36% of all debt advice in November 2021, this increased to 37% in November 2022, and to 41% in November 2023. Overall, priority debts as a percentage of debt advice have increased by 17% since November 2021. As priority debts can have significant consequences when unpaid, this upward trend is an indication that more and more people are falling behind on essential bills and struggling to make ends meet, as the pressure on household budgets, caused by the cost of living crisis, continues.

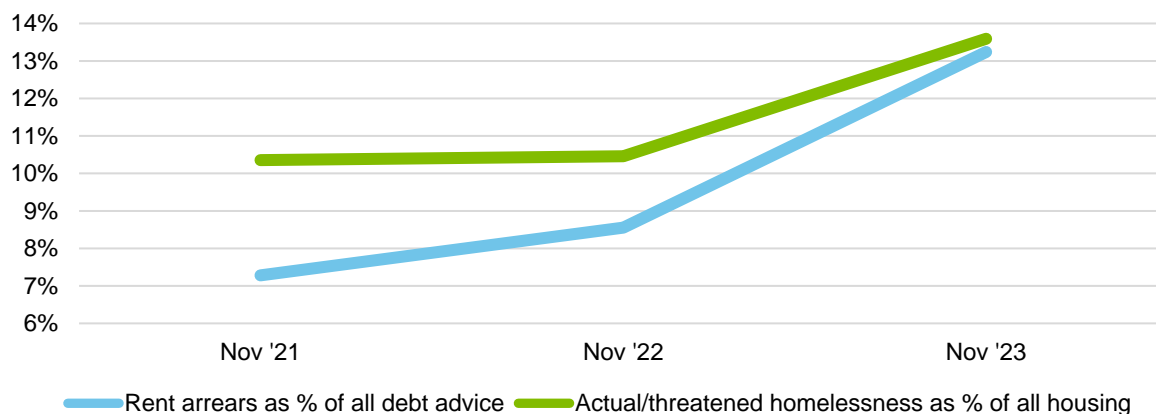


Advice on priority debts as a percentage of all debt advice



Advice on rent arrears, as a percentage of all debt advice, has also increased year-on-year from November 2021. Whereas advice on rent arrears accounted for 7% of all debt advice in November 2021, this increased to 9% in November 2022, further increasing to 13% in November 2023. This amounts to an 82% increase from November 2021 to November 2023. Additionally, advice relating to actual/threatened homelessness, as a percentage of all housing advice, accounted for 10% in November 2021 and 2022, increasing to 14% in November 2023. Thereby increasing by 31% from November 2021 to November 2023. This rising demand on housing-related advice demonstrates more people falling behind on rent and being threatened with illegal eviction, despite legislation in place to protect tenants. People are having to make difficult decisions regarding their spending and bills, as the cost of living crisis continues.

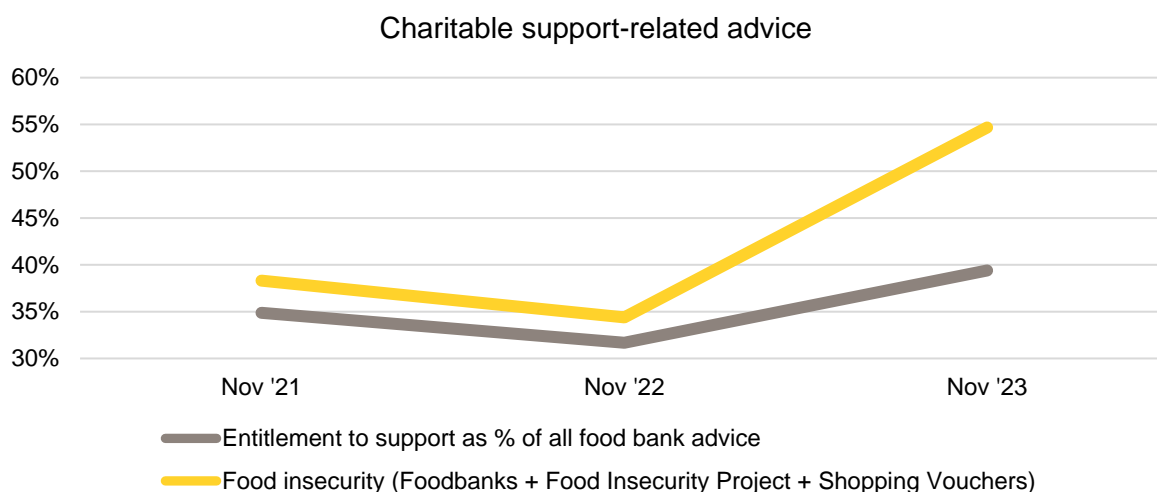
Housing-related advice





Advice in relation to Entitlement to Support, as a percentage of all food bank advice, has increased by 13% from November 2021 to November 2023, having accounted for 35% of all food bank advice in November 2021, 32% in November 2022, and 39% in November 2023. Moreover, advice pertaining to Food Insecurity has increased by 43% from November 2021 to November 2023.

Advice relating to Food Insecurity accounted for 38% of food bank advice in November 2021, 34% in November 2022, with a sharp increase to 55% in November 2023. Thus, conveying the link between high energy prices, food inflation and the increased demand for food insecurity advice, as people struggle to pay for basic essentials.



www.cas.org.uk

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