

Essity co-commissions research and donates products to tackle hygiene poverty

Adults living alone believe they need an annual income of at least £31,536 to cover their outgoings and still afford essentials such as food, clothes and hygiene products.

But with the UK's average salary of £29,669 somewhat short of this, many feel they are being pushed ever closer to hygiene poverty.

The scale of the current cost of living crisis has been illustrated after a survey of 2,000 adults found one in four people living alone are struggling with the current financial crisis.

As a result, 56 per cent of those have had to make difficult decisions, such as whether to pay their rent over buying food or hygiene items.

And more than half (52 per cent) of that same demographic have had to stop socialising, while 14 per cent have even gone without everyday items like toilet roll or period products.

However, the impact is not just being felt in single-occupied households, with 23 per cent of all those polled currently struggling with their finances, leaving 57 per cent having to choose which essential items to spend their money on.

Of those in employment who are feeling financial pressure, 23 per cent are buying less food for their households while 10 per cent have cut spending on products like shampoo, toothpaste, and soap.

And struggling households with dependents are more likely to find it hard to buy basic hygiene products than those without (32 per cent compared to 22 per cent).

The research was commissioned by hygiene and health company Essity, in partnership with, Unilever, Haleon, Kimberly Clark and Edgewell, to launch an in-store promotion in Tesco stores throughout April and May, where customers buy two products and a hygiene product will be donated to charity In Kind Direct.

Rosanne Gray, CEO of charity, In Kind Direct said: "Many people experiencing hygiene poverty face the impossible decision to heat, eat or keep clean on a daily basis, and unfortunately more and more people are being pushed into this position.

"We know hygiene poverty disproportionately affects those already struggling, but the research shows that financial difficulties are now impacting everyone.

"The ripple effect impacts mental health, workplace productivity and school attendance – it's something that requires collective action which is why we've formed this partnership with Tesco and some of our committed corporate partners to really make a difference."

The research also found those who have struggled to buy hygiene products during the last year have had to borrow from friends or family (30 per cent), use free products in public areas (26 per cent) or received items from a charity (21 per cent).

Worryingly, half of those who find it hard to afford hygiene products avoid leaving the house, with 19 per cent admitting they can't face attending a job interview.

Of those who are struggling financially, young adults are most likely to have to make a difficult decision about what essential items to spend their money on.

With 77 per cent of those aged 18-24 and 73 per cent of 25-34-year-olds in this position having to choose between rent, food or other everyday items compared to 36 per cent of the over 65s finding it difficult financially.

While twice as many struggling young adults (45 per cent of 18-24s and 40 per cent of 25-34s) have found it hard to buy basic hygiene products such as toilet rolls and toothpaste than older generations. (45-54s and 55-64s – both 23 per cent).

Caz Gandy-Brown, Service and Volunteer Manager at The Abbey Centre in South Westminster, which receives donated hygiene products from In Kind Direct, said: “We’re in one of London’s wealthiest boroughs, a stone’s throw from the Houses of Parliament, so have people from all walks of life coming in regularly who are struggling to stay on top of their bills, and even afford essential hygiene products.

“Westminster has some of the greatest health and wealth inequalities in the country, and we see people in different areas of employment needing assistance – we’re living proof this issue is affecting everyone.”

Thomas Maier, Category Buying Manager for Beauty and Personal Care at Tesco, added: “This new research highlights how the number of families being impacted by hygiene poverty has grown in recent years. The work done by groups like The Abbey Centre to help people is so important and we are really pleased to be working again with our suppliers and In Kind Direct to provide hygiene poverty products where they are needed most.”

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