

# State of separation: divorce in 2023

Exploring how adults in England & Wales  
feel about divorce and dissolution.



# Introduction



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## **There is no doubt that the rate of divorce and dissolution<sup>1</sup> has increased markedly in England & Wales in recent years.**

The Office for National Statistics reported a 9.6% increase in 2021, with 113,505 divorces granted in England & Wales compared to 103,592 in 2020.

Much noise has been made around the impact of the pandemic on these figures, but there are other external factors at play in recent times. Not only have we seen the introduction of ‘no fault’ divorce, but we are now in the midst of a cost of living crisis.

So how do these external factors play into adults’ decision making when it comes to divorce and dissolution?

We sought to find out with this survey; uncovering the thoughts, feelings and actions of adults

in England & Wales, whether (i) considering divorce/dissolution, (ii) already going through divorce/dissolution, or (iii) when it is not even on the agenda.

What is clear is that, whilst the current cost of living crisis is having an impact on decision making, the findings also raise a warning sign that public opinion and public policy are out of step with each other when it comes to whether behaviour should impact a financial settlement.

As Family Lawyers, it is our responsibility to guide our clients through the process to minimise conflict and cost and ensure a good outcome for them from both a financial and practical perspective.

<sup>1</sup> Reference to “dissolution” is to dissolution of a civil partnership.

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# The findings

## Executive summary

### **The cost of living crisis is making adults think about divorce/dissolution differently**

- Over half of adults in England & Wales would consider postponing divorce or dissolution as a result of the current economic climate

### **Amicability is high on the agenda**

- Just over a third of adults consider it as one of the most important aspects of a settlement

### **Legal representation is no longer a must in all separations**

- Just over a quarter of 35-44 year olds are now less likely to appoint a solicitor

### **Splitting up does not mean moving out**

- On average, adults would consider remaining in the same property as their spouse for ten months

### **Behaviour still matters**

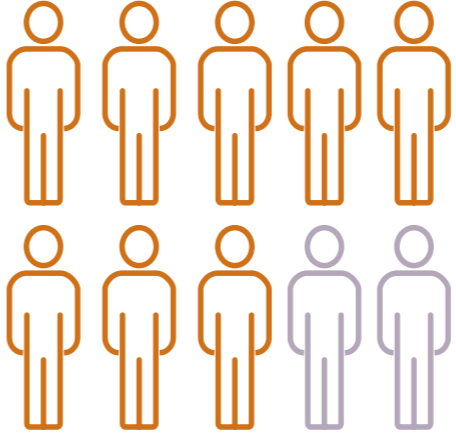
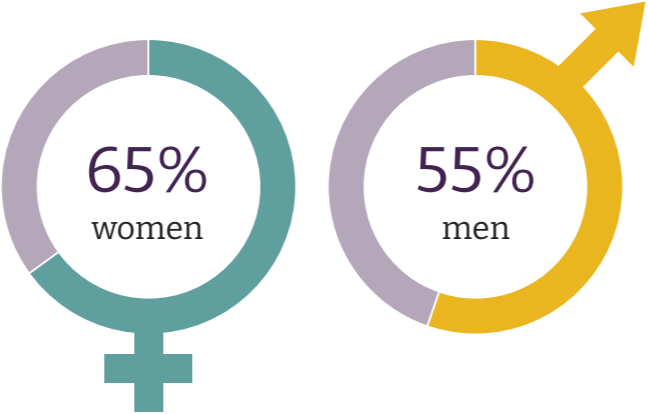
- Just over seven in ten adults think the financial settlement should take their partner's behaviour, such as being unfaithful, into account

# The impact of the cost of living crisis

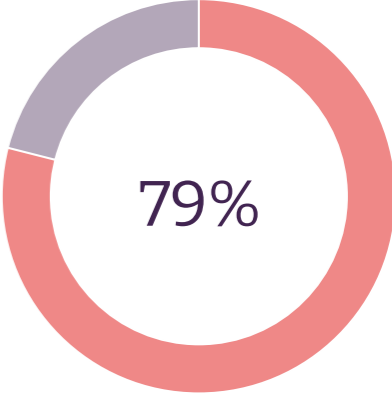
Over half of adults in England & Wales would think about divorce differently now compared to a year ago



Women are more likely to think about divorce differently



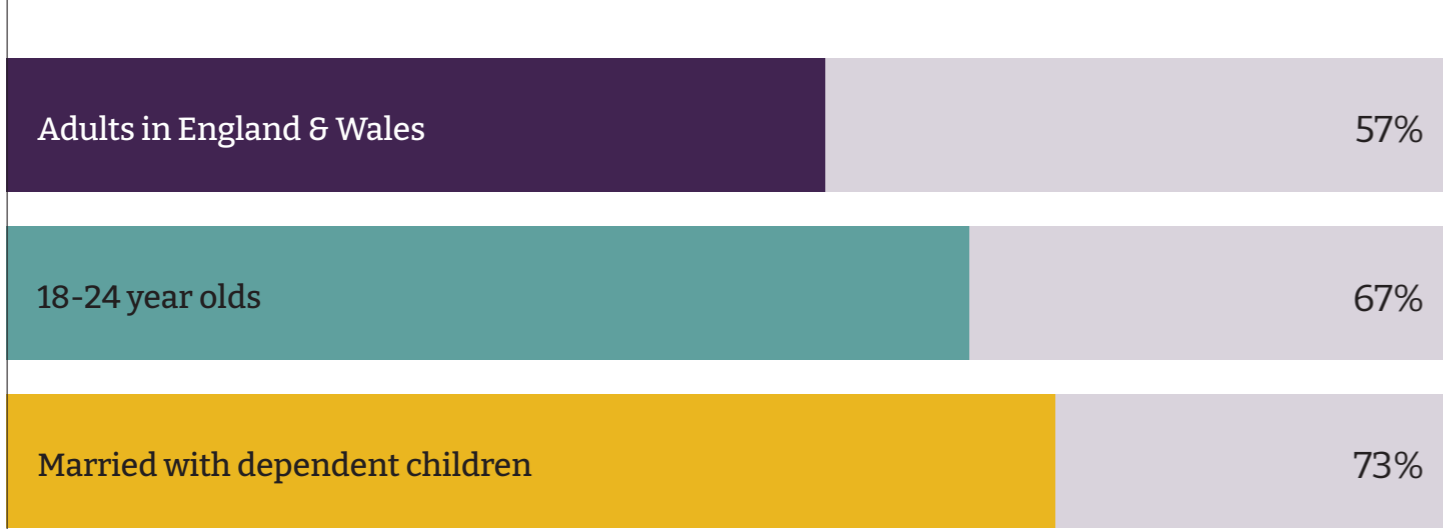
Eight in ten adults aged 65+ wouldn't think about divorce differently



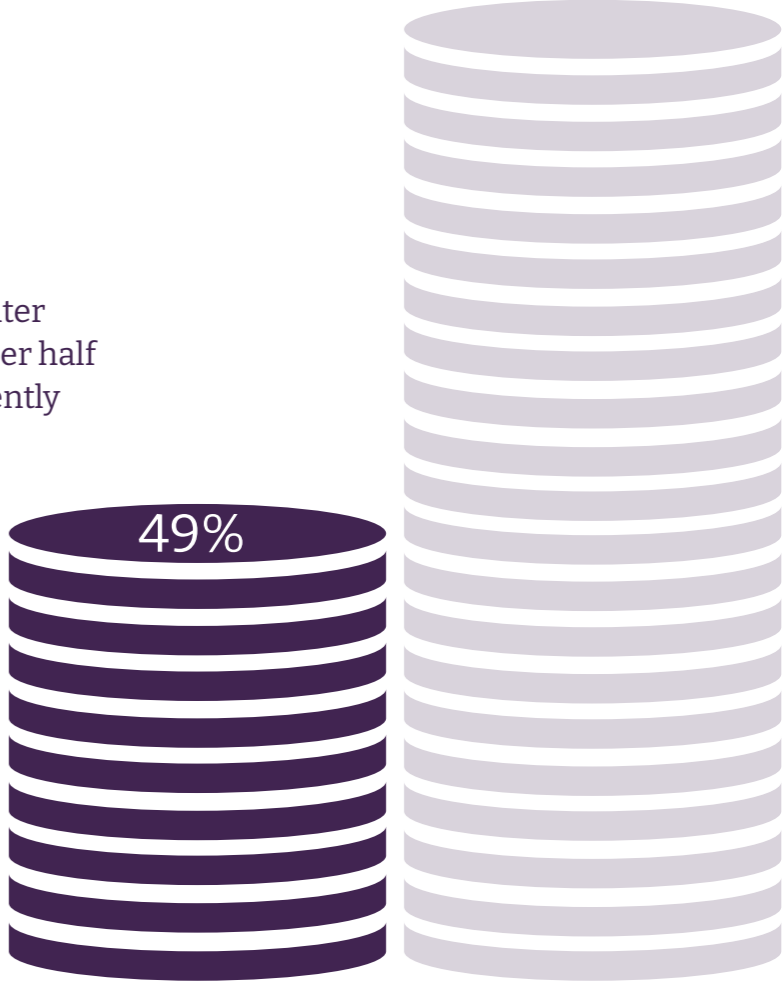
Just under eight in ten adults who are married with dependent children and already considering divorce would think about divorce differently

**Over half of adults would consider postponing divorce or dissolution as a result of the current economic climate**

- This rises to just over two thirds for 18-24 year olds
- Those who are married and considering divorce with dependent children are more likely to consider postponing divorce than any other demographic



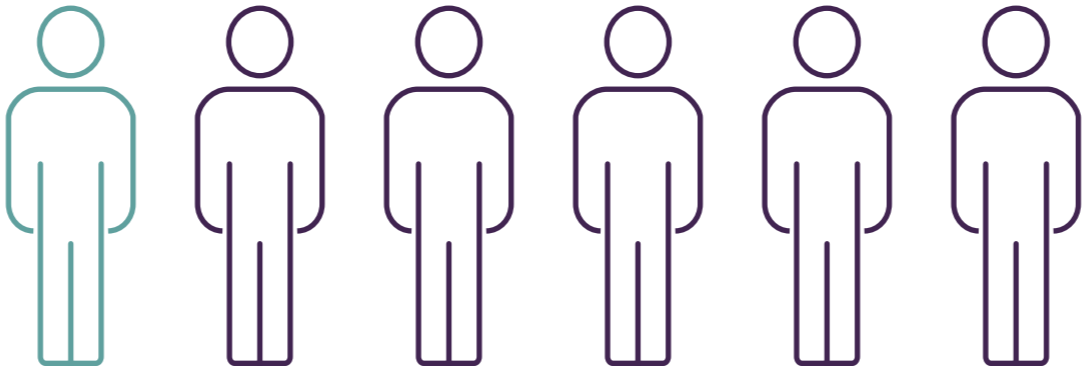
The recent cost of living crisis has led to greater concerns about financial impact for just under half of those who now think about divorce differently



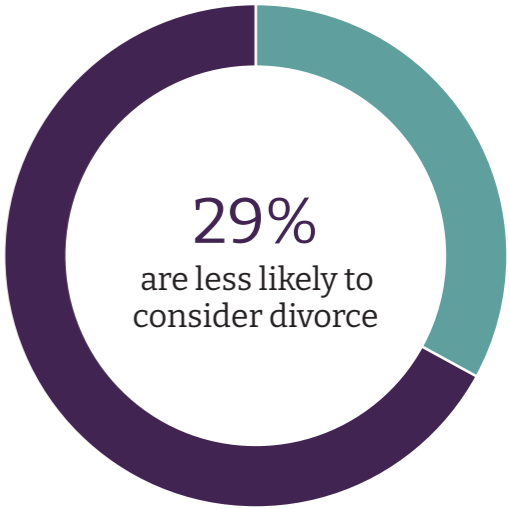
# The legal landscape



Just over a fifth of those who think about divorce differently thanks to the cost of living crisis are now less likely to appoint a solicitor



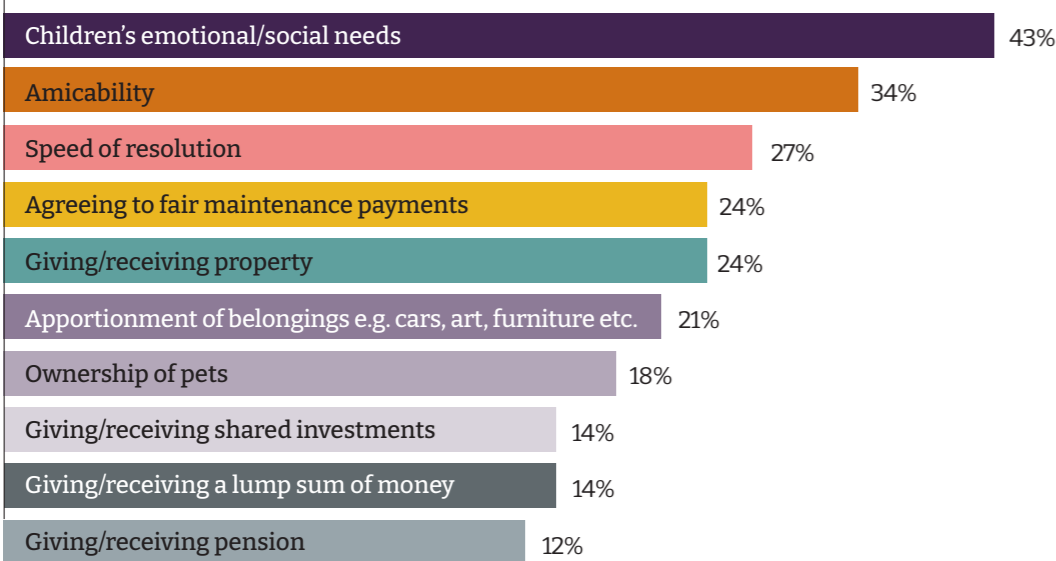
1 in 6 (16%) adults do not think it is important to have legal representation when going through a divorce



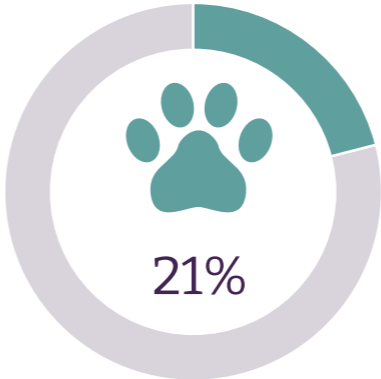
Over a quarter of those considering or in the process of divorce are now less likely to consider it thanks to the introduction of 'no fault' divorce

# Settlement considerations – what’s important

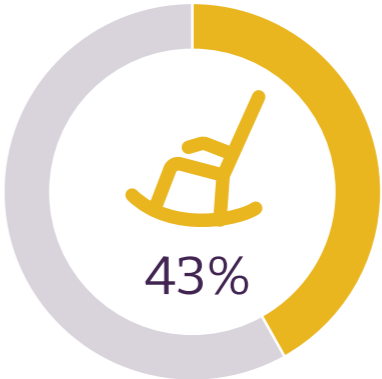
The most important aspects of a divorce/dissolution settlement for adults are:



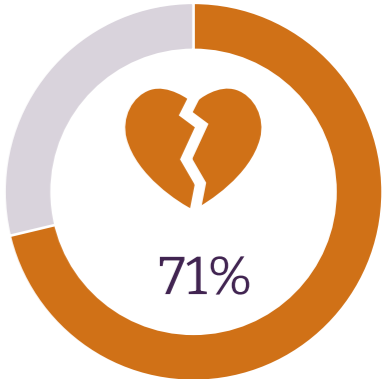
Ownership of pets is more important for women than men, with just over a fifth female recipients selecting it as one of the most important aspects of a divorce/dissolution settlement, as opposed to 15% of men



Almost half of adults would not expect to split pensions in divorce/dissolution settlements

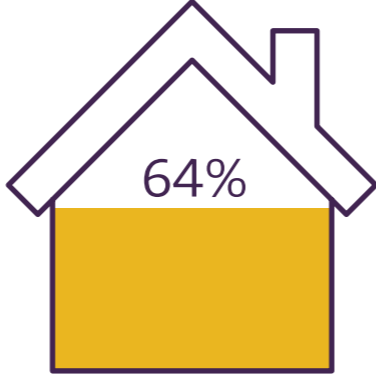


Just over 7 in 10 of adults think the financial settlement should take their partner’s behaviour, such as being unfaithful, into account

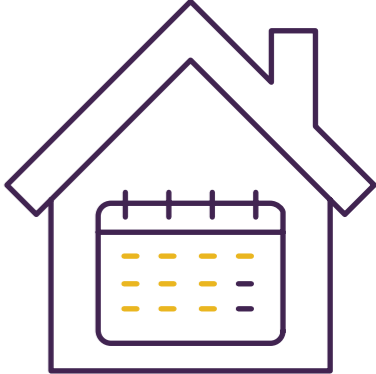


# Living arrangements

Almost two thirds\* of adults would consider remaining in the same property as their spouse post-divorce/dissolution



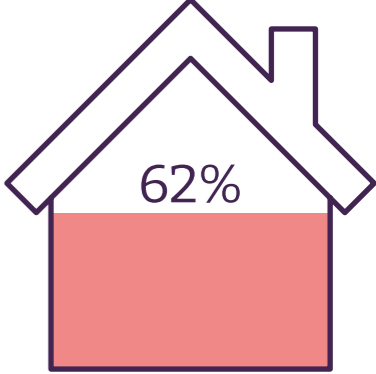
On average, adults would consider remaining in the same property as their spouse post-divorce/dissolution for 10 months



Over a third of those who are now thinking about divorce differently have greater concern over their ability to set up living arrangements thanks to the cost of living crisis



Just under two thirds of those with dependent children would consider “nesting” if they were to divorce/separate from their partner



\*Yes (net) – including all ‘Yes’ answer options combined



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Survey conducted by Opinion Matters on behalf of Birketts, surveying 2,000 adults in England & Wales conducted by Opinion Matters on behalf of Birketts between 20 March - 27 March 2023.

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