Almost Six in Ten Greater Manchester Residents Have Kept Debt Secret from their Partner

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Almost six in 10 (59%) people across Greater Manchester have kept debt secret from their partner, according to new research commissioned by Manchester Credit Union.

The Greater Manchester Money Report, which is based on a survey of more than 5,000 residents, highlights how debt remains a private and often taboo subject, despite being a reality for many households.

The findings show that 67% of people across Greater Manchester have some form of debt, while 10% are struggling to repay it. Of those who have kept debt secret, 47% have between £1,000 and £20,000 of undisclosed debt, with £5,000–£10,000 the most common amount (17%).

The issue is particularly pronounced in Manchester, where 73% of residents report having secret debt, followed by Oldham at 58%. The figure falls to 48% in Wigan, the lowest of the boroughs surveyed.

The research also highlights how hidden financial pressure can affect people at different stages of life. Among the age groups surveyed, 35–44-year-olds had the largest proportion of people with secret debt (82%), with almost a quarter (24%) reporting hidden debt of between £10,001 and £20,000.

Despite this, money remains a difficult subject for many people to discuss openly. Almost a quarter (24%[1]) of Greater Manchester residents say they are uncomfortable talking about money. Among those who feel uncomfortable, 57% say they find conversations about personal finances awkward or embarrassing, while 47% believe financial matters should be kept private.

The reluctance to talk about money also affects where people turn when they need help. Family and friends are the most common source of support, with 38% saying they would turn to them in times of financial difficulty, compared with 18% who would approach a bank.

Mandy Wilcock, CEO of Manchester Credit Union, said: “What really stands out from this research is the contradiction in how we talk about money. At a time when rising living costs are putting increasing pressure on household finances, many people are still keeping their financial worries and debt hidden from those closest to them. But the research also shows that when people do find themselves in financial difficulty, family and friends are often the first people they turn to.

“Those conversations are incredibly important and can be a valuable first step, but family and friends can’t always provide the specialist knowledge or support someone needs to understand their options and get back on track. Financial pressure isn't always visible, and sometimes the people who appear to be coping are the ones who need support most.”

The Greater Manchester Money Report also found significant differences in financial habits and attitudes across the region. While 62%[2] of residents have a rainy-day fund, this falls significantly among lower-income households, with 68%[3] of those earning £15,000 or less saying they do not have one.

Mandy added: “There should be no shame in asking for help with money. Financial pressures can affect anyone, particularly when the cost of everyday essentials continues to strain household budgets. We need to make it easier for people to move from having a conversation about money to getting the right help. Greater financial education and better signposting to trusted advice could help people feel more confident seeking support, before financial worries become a crisis.”

Manchester Credit Union has been providing affordable and ethical financial services to local people for almost 20 years, typically supporting those underserved by mainstream banks. As a member-owned, not-for-profit financial cooperative, it offers savings accounts and fair, affordable personal loans, with no application fees or early repayment fees. It has 36,500 members across Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford, Oldham and High Peak in Derbyshire.

The full Greater Manchester Money Report explores how residents across the region are managing debt, savings, financial goals and conversations about money, as well as differences between generations, incomes and boroughs. You can read the full report here.

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The research was conducted independently by Censuswide between 28 April and 20 May 2026 among 5,008 adults aged 18 and over living in Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford, Oldham and Wigan, weighted to be representative based on age, gender and borough.

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Notes to Editors

About Manchester Credit Union

Manchester Credit Union is a not-for-profit organisation that exists solely for the benefit of its members across Manchester, Bury, Bolton, Salford, Oldham, Rochdale, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford and High Peak in Derbyshire. Any profit generated is returned to members through dividends on savings or reinvested to improve services.

https://manchestercreditunion.co.uk/

[1] All ‘Uncomfortable’ responses combined.

[2] All ‘Yes’ responses combined.

[3] All ‘No’ responses combined.

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