

# The UK Cost of Living 1750-2005

(based on 2005 = 1.00)

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175-	146	149	144	146	141	149	144	119	119	129
176-	133	141	136	131	120	117	115	110	111	120
177-	120	111	101	101	99.6	107	108	108	105	115
178-	119	113	111	99.6	98.3	104	104	104	99.6	101
179-	99.6	99.6	98.3	95.7	87.9	79.4	74.7	83.0	84.9	75.4
180-	55.3	49.5	64.4	67.9	66.1	57.0	59.3	60.7	58.3	53.3
181-	51.9	53.3	47.0	45.8	52.6	58.8	64.4	56.6	56.6	57.9
182-	63.8	72.5	83.9	78.6	72.5	61.7	65.5	69.8	71.8	72.5
183-	75.4	68.5	73.9	78.6	85.8	83.9	75.4	73.9	73.2	68.5
184-	67.3	68.5	74.7	83.9	83.9	80.3	77.0	68.5	78.6	83.9
185-	88.9	92.2	92.2	83.9	73.2	71.1	71.1	74.7	82.1	83.0
186-	80.3	78.6	80.3	83.0	83.9	83.0	78.6	73.9	74.7	78.6
187-	78.6	77.8	74.7	71.8	74.7	76.2	76.2	77.0	78.6	82.1
188-	79.4	80.3	79.4	80.3	82.1	84.9	85.8	86.8	85.8	84.9
189-	84.9	83.9	83.9	84.9	85.8	86.8	87.9	85.8	85.8	84.9
190-	81.2	81.2	81.2	80.3	80.3	80.3	80.3	79.4	79.4	78.6
191-	77.8	77.8	75.4	76.2	76.2	67.9	57.4	45.8	37.5	34.1
192-	29.5	32.3	37.5	39.9	40.2	40.2	40.4	41.5	41.5	42.0
193-	43.2	45.0	46.1	47.3	47.3	47.0	46.7	45.0	44.5	43.2
194-	37.0	33.3	31.1	30.1	29.3	28.5	27.7	25.8	24.0	23.3
195-	22.6	20.7	19.0	18.4	18.1	17.3	16.5	15.9	15.4	15.4
196-	15.2	14.7	14.1	13.8	13.4	12.8	12.3	12.0	11.5	10.9
197-	10.2	9.34	8.71	7.99	6.88	5.54	4.75	4.10	3.79	3.34
198-	2.83	2.53	2.33	2.23	2.12	2.00	1.94	1.86	1.77	1.64
199-	1.50	1.42	1.37	1.35	1.31	1.27	1.24	1.20	1.16	1.14
200-	1.11	1.09	1.07	1.04	1.01	1.00				

This chart allows you to work out what amounts of money in any year from 1750 onwards would be equivalent to in modern terms, taking inflation into account.

For example, in *The New Man* (set in 1908), Thomas' salary is stated as being £50 per year. Hence today, this would be approximately equivalent to  $79.4 \times £50 = £3970$  per year. This sounds ludicrous, but remember that servants lived in and didn't have any rent/mortgage, food bills or travel expenses to pay. Any medical bills were also usually paid for by the employer. Apart from clothes and the like, this was practically all money that could be saved away or spent as desired.

Another example. A lilac maid's dress like Rose wore was listed as costing 4/1 (4 shillings and one old penny – about 20 new pence) in the Army and Navy stores catalogue of 1910. Today's price would be:  $77.8 \times £0.20 = £15.56$

Note that Britain did not use decimal money (where £1 is made up of 100 new pence) until 1971. Prior to this, the pound was instead divided in 20 shillings, with each shilling divided into 12 old pence (written as 12d). The monetary unit of a guinea (sometimes mentioned in the programme) was £1.1.0 (one pound and one shilling) and was how professional people like doctors and solicitors used to present their bills.

All sorts of non-self-explanatory terms were used for the different denominations and can occasionally be heard within the programme. A shilling was often called a "bob". A florin was a coin worth two shillings. A half-crown was a coin worth 2/6 (two shillings and sixpence). A "tanner" was a sixpence. A farthing was a tiny coin worth 1/4d. A "quid" was (and is) very common slang for a pound. Sovereigns (and half-sovereigns) were actual gold coins worth a pound (and half thereof) used up till the early Thirties.

[Small print: Adapted from *Consumer Price Inflation Since 1750* by Jim O'Donoghue and Louise Goulding (Office for National Statistics) and Grahame Allen (House of Commons Library). Published in *Economic Trends* 604 (March 2004) by Office for National Statistics.]