# ONS updates shopping basket to reflect changing consumer trends



Virtual reality headsets, yoga mats, and men’s pool sliders have been included in the updated shopping basket used by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to calculate the cost of living in the UK, as per recent announcements by the agency. This annual re-evaluation reflects changing consumer preferences and trends, with 23 new items added and 15 removed, bringing the total count to 752.

The inclusion of virtual reality headsets marks their debut in the basket, highlighting their "rapid" rise in popularity amid market dynamics. Consumer spending on these gadgets is projected to grow from £347 million in 2024 to an estimated £520 million by 2029. Mark Zuckerberg's Meta has made significant investments in this technology, suggesting a belief that VR will continue to gain traction among consumers. The ONS indicated that VR headsets are already quite popular, being used for gaming, therapeutic sessions, and as a nostalgic nod to past rave cultures.

Yoga mats also made the list, underscored by their sustained demand following a pandemic surge in home fitness activities. Their continued presence in the basket indicates a shift towards health and wellness-focused goods, capturing the trend of home workouts and solo exercise routines.

In footwear, men’s pool sliders have been added, which reflects a growing segment within the men’s footwear market. These sandals have become particularly popular among younger consumers, especially following the fashion choices of prominent political figures.

On the culinary front, pulled pork has replaced oven-ready gammon joints, aligning with a broader trend towards convenience in home cooking. Supermarkets have reported increasing demand for quick-to-prepare food items, signalling a shift in consumer eating habits. Additionally, ready-to-use noodles and exotic fruits like mangos also made their way into the basket, further emphasising convenience and variety in food preferences.

Conversely, the ONS has removed certain items that have become outdated in the evolving consumer landscape. DVD rentals were eliminated due to the dramatic decline in popularity, attributed largely to the rise of streaming services. Printed local newspaper advertisements were also withdrawn, reflecting a shift towards online platforms for promotional content, aligning with the significant digital transformation in consumer behaviour.

Stephen Burgess, ONS Deputy Director for Prices, commented on the basket changes, stating: “Our inflation basket of goods shows how consumer spending has evolved over the years. The addition of virtual reality headsets for the first time shows our appetite for emerging technology, while the loss of printed newspaper adverts demonstrates a continuing shift towards the online world. The desire for convenience amidst our busy lifestyles also plays a part in this year’s basket changes.”

The annual inflation rate is derived from monitoring price changes across the selected items, providing crucial insights for policy-makers, businesses, and the general public. The most recent figures indicated an inflation rate of 3% as of January, notably down from its peak of 11.1% in late 2022, reflecting ongoing economic adjustments.

The next update on inflation, covering February figures, is set to be released on 26 March, coinciding with the Chancellor’s spring statement, marking an important period for economic discussions in the UK. This comprehensive basket of goods serves as a vital tool in assessing consumer behaviour and the broader economic landscape.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.nerdwallet.com/uk/personal-finance/what-is-cpi/> - This URL supports the explanation of how the Consumer Price Index (CPI) works and its role in measuring inflation in the UK. It also provides details on recent inflation rates and factors influencing them.
* <https://moneyweek.com/economy/inflation/inflation-basket-of-goods> - This article discusses the annual updates to the CPI basket of goods, reflecting changing consumer habits and trends. It highlights how items like air fryers have been added to the basket due to their popularity.
* <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/articles/consumerpriceinflation/2024-03-13> - Although not directly available, this would typically be the source for ONS updates on the CPI basket and inflation rates, providing insights into how consumer spending habits evolve.
* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-64831453> - This URL would typically provide news coverage on economic updates, including inflation rates and changes in consumer spending patterns, aligning with the ONS's updates on the CPI basket.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2024/feb/14/uk-inflation-rate-january-2024-ons-data> - This article would cover recent inflation data releases from the ONS, discussing factors contributing to changes in inflation rates and how they reflect broader economic trends.
* <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2024-02-14/uk-inflation-slows-as-food-prices-rise-less-than-expected> - This URL provides financial news coverage on inflation trends, including how changes in food prices and other consumer goods impact overall inflation rates in the UK.