Lowell

Debt Still one of Britain's biggest Taboos, New Lowell Study Finds

(Mon 16th March 2026) This year, Debt Awareness Week has been running for twelve years as an ongoing campaign to encourage open conversations about debt, reduce the stigma around financial struggles, and provide support and resources to help people take control of their finances.

A new survey by debt management firm Lowell surveyed 294 of their customers and found that 93% of Brits think that people should talk more openly about debt. With debt being such a taboo subject, opening up can help people receive the help they need and pull themselves out of the debt trap.

The survey also asked Brits whether they'd rather talk about debt or face another awkward situation. The results are below:

Would you rather…	Option 1	Option 2
Talk to your family about sex or debt?	Sex (25%)	Debt (75%)
Go to the dentist or talk about debt?	Dentist (40%)	Debt (60%)
Clean your oven or talk about debt?	Oven (51%)	Debt (49%)
Ask for a pay rise or ask for debt advice?	Pay rise (47%)	Debt advice (53%)
Search history be leaked or your bank balance?	Search history (69%)	Bank balance (31%)
Talk openly about mental health or debt?	Mental health (68%)	Debt (32%)

As a nation known for being prudish, the study reveals that 24%, a quarter of the population, would rather talk to a family member about sex than debt. Although debt is stigmatised as being shameful, it seems many people would still rather talk about a deeply intimate act than money troubles, especially with family.

The survey also revealed just how uncomfortable Brits are discussing debt. Four in ten (40%) would rather visit the dentist than talk about their finances, 51% would choose cleaning the oven, and 47% would rather ask for a pay rise.

To demonstrate how protective Brits can be about their finances, a shocking 69% of people would rather have their search history leaked rather than their bank balance. While people are becoming more comfortable sharing personal information, they draw the line at their finances, something which people often tie with their self-worth.

Finally, with the cultural change of people becoming much more open about their mental health, 68% of respondents would rather talk about this topic than debt, showing there's a larger stigma around financial money troubles than mental health.

John Pears, UK CEO at Lowell, reacts to the survey findings:

"Our survey shows that while people are increasingly open about topics like mental health or personal struggles, debt remains more taboo than many would expect. Many Brits would rather discuss intimate or potentially embarrassing personal topics than talk about money troubles.

"While it's positive to see that many people are becoming more open to talking about debt, there's still a long way to go. This stigma can make it harder to seek support early, which is often the point where small adjustments could prevent long-term financial problems.

"We find that one of the best ways to tackle problem debt is to become comfortable speaking about it, whether to friends and family, or to advisors who can help you make the right financial choices for your situation.

"For a long time debt has had unnecessary stigma around it, although many of the reasons people fall into debt is no fault of their own. Income shocks, illness, bereavement and job loss all contribute significantly to someone falling into debt, but are often things that are hard to avoid.

"We hope highlighting others' attitudes around debt might help others see how common these challenges are, and encourage them to take the first step in addressing their own situation. The more people realize they're not alone, the easier it becomes to seek help, make a plan, and start regaining control over their finances."

For support on managing debt during Debt Awareness Week, visit the Lowell Help and Support Centre.

Notes to editors:

Methodology:

As part of Debt Awareness Week, Lowell UK surveyed 294 of their customers to understand attitudes toward debt, asking whether they would rather discuss money worries or engage in another activity. The survey ran in February 2026.

About Lowell:

Lowell is a leading UK-based provider of credit management services, renowned for our expertise in managing a wide range of debt portfolios and delivering exceptional outcomes for our customers and clients.

About John Pears:

John Pears is CEO of Lowell UK, the UK's leading credit management and debt collection business, supporting millions of customers to manage their debts and improve their financial wellbeing. With over 25 years' experience in financial services, John has a deep understanding of consumer credit, affordability, and the evolving challenges facing households across the UK.

John Pears' headshot can be downloaded here.