

4 I haven't got life insurance. Am I in trouble?

MONEYED
Insured and/or persistent bachelor

CRUNCH
Uninsured with house and girlfriend

RECESSION
Uninsured with wife and kids



A recent Swiss Re report into the UK's life insurance industry found that we have been shunning life cover. Key to making your decision is working out how much cover you really need. Guarantee that your partner can handle the mortgage repayments without your income.

The bottom line: You only need it if your family won't be able to pay the mortgage without you.

5 Am I screwed if I don't have a financial advisor?



MONEYED
Rely on a team of professionals

CRUNCH
Rely on your local bank manager

RECESSION
Rely on friends

Research conducted by the personal finance advisors moneynet.co.uk shows that 74% of men have never consulted an independent financial advisor. And they are probably right not to. "If you have little disposable income there's no point spending £150 an hour on a financial adviser," says Tom McPhail, pensions specialist at investment planners Hargreaves Lansdown.

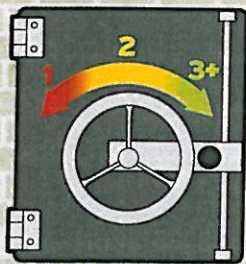
"It's when you earn more than £100,000 that it would be mad not to. Be careful what you rely on them for. If all you need is credit cards and an overdraft, use the financial pages," says McPhail. For anything bigger – mortgages, investments and pensions might fall into that bracket – call in the pros. But beware: IFAs only need one certificate in financial planning to be registered by the

6 Is my bank going to fail and wipe out my savings?

MONEYED
Savings with a broad mix of banks

CRUNCH
Savings with two banks

RECESSION
All savings with one bank



Though the Northern Rock queues suggested otherwise, this is a nice problem to have. The government guarantees your savings up to £35,000, so "if you have savings of more than £35,000, spread them between banks," says Malcolm Cuthbert, managing director of financial planning at Kilik & Co. "You're guaranteed this amount back if the bank collapses." Aim to have savings of 3-6 months income spread round several banks.

The bottom line: This is a worry that you can shelve unless you've saved £35k+. Safeguard yourself by spreading your money around.

IS YOUR BODY IN RECESSION?

Gauge your net physical worth with this quiz devised by specialist strength and conditioning trainer Gareth Cole (thethirdspace.com)

Score: 5 for (a); 3 for (b); 1 for (c)

1. How many press-ups can you do before you collapse in a heap?

- a) fewer than 15
- b) 15-30
- c) 30 plus

2. Squat with your back against a wall. Lift one foot up straight and start the clock. How long can you stay there (total for both legs)?

- a) under 30 seconds
- b) 30-45 seconds
- c) 45 seconds plus

3. How many close-grip pull-ups can you do?

- a) fewer than 5
- b) 5-10
- c) 10 plus

4. How many sit-ups can you do a minute?

- a) under 25
- b) 25-45
- c) 45 plus

5. How fast can you run 800m?

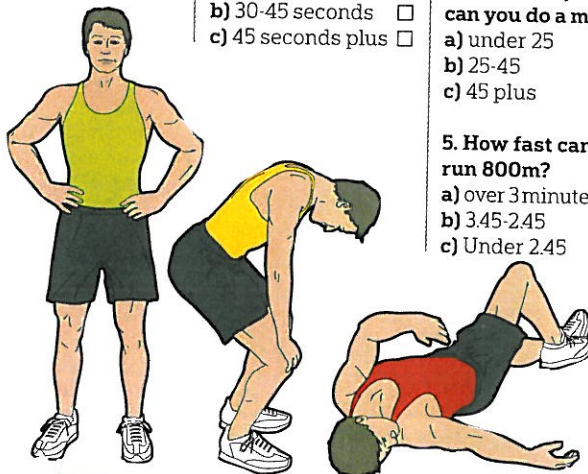
- a) over 3 minutes 45
- b) 3:45-2:45
- c) Under 2:45

HOW DID YOU SCORE?

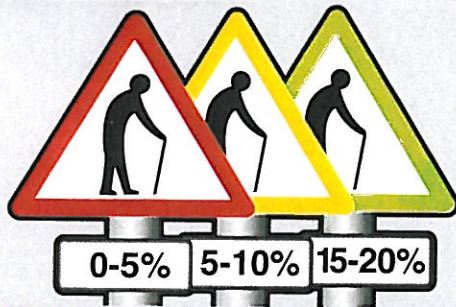
5-9 points = panting for breath
10-19 points = panting for fun
20+ points = panting for another protein shake

THE REMEDY

For essential fitness, Cole recommends a circuit of 10 press-ups, 10 squats, 10 lat pull-downs, three 30-second plank holds and five minute-long interval sprints. Do this three times a week, starting at three circuits if you scored less than 10, four if you scored 10-19, or five for 20+. Add another circuit every fortnight.



7 Is my pension going to be worth anything by the time I need it?



MONEYED
15-20% of salary over 40 years

CRUNCH
5-10% of salary over 40 years

RECESSION
0-5% of salary over 40 years

A survey by Zurich found 40% of us aren't saving enough for retirement. "It should be 10% of your gross salary, over 40 years," says McPhail. For a comfortable retirement income, the contribution is 15 to 20%. The good news is that many companies will match your pension contributions.

The bottom line: If your company will make payments, grit your teeth and get reading those documents.



Financial Services Authority, so approach at least three IFAs before choosing one, and check their qualifications against the list at unbiased.co.uk.

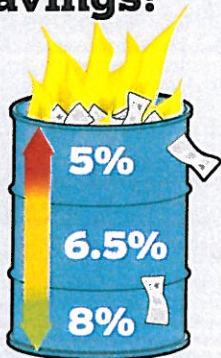
The bottom line: Financial comparison sites will do the simpler jobs performed by many IFAs. So don't waste your money unless you earn six figures, and check out their credentials.

8 Will inflation wipe out my savings?

MONEYED
Savings earning 8% interest

CRUNCH
Savings earning 6.5% interest

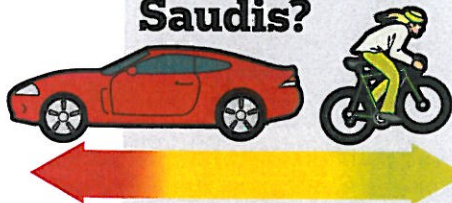
RECESSION
Savings earning 5% interest



Money bonfires for warmth aren't likely in the near future, but inflation is on the rise. The way to beat inflation eating your savings is to look for "index-linked" products. Try National Counties building society's index-linked cash ISA: it pays 2.6% interest every year plus a sum at the end which matches inflation over the last three years.

The bottom line: Put your money in a savings account linked to cost of living; it'll earn bigger returns.

9 Does my oil-dependent ass belong to the Saudis?



MONEYED
Fossil-fuel shunning hippy

CRUNCH
Renting in a period building

RECESSION
100-mile daily commute

Unless you have a wind turbine out back, yes. We rely on oil for power, heating, and travel, so if prices soar, you'll feel it. Reduce heating bills at energysavingtrust.org.uk. Visit your local council's website – the government's grants provide an interest-free loan to improve the energy-efficiency of your home. Then it's all about car-sharing, solar panels, and voting Green.

The bottom line: Control your oil dependence by getting a full online analysis of your energy use.

IS YOUR LUNCH IN RECESSION?

Is your daily nutrition plan the business or a liability? Work it out with our culinary balance sheet



Work out where you stand by totting up what you eat on this table by nutritionist Kim Pearson (kim-pearson.com). To correct the balance add foods from the "profit" column, and remove those from the "loss" column.

PROFIT

Whey protein Great protein source to add to smoothies.
Score: £500

Berries Packed with antioxidants.
Score: £800

Pumpkin seeds Full of trace minerals for your immune system and sperm production.
Score: £300

Game meats Filled with omega-3 fats.
Score: £250

Fresh juice Full of vitamins and minerals. A great coffee replacement.
Score: £500

Wild oily fish Great source of omega-3 and protein.
Score: £500

Spinach It's rich in iron and B vitamins – essential for energy.
Score: £800

Quinoa A complete source of protein.
Score: £600

Natural organic yoghurt Contains probiotic bacteria, for healthy digestion and immune function.
Score: £500

Red wine A source of antioxidants. Good for health if consumed moderately.
Score: £100

LOSS

Fizzy drinks A way to pile on pounds. Diet options are no better.
Score: -£700

White bread High GI, low in nutrients.
Score: -£400

Factory farmed eggs & chicken Opt for organic or free range.
Score: -£800

Cornflakes Breakfast cereals are high GI and promote weight gain.

Score: -£300

Ham, cheese, pickle and lettuce sandwich This contains half your daily salt and saturated fat intake.
Score: -£800

Big Mac Processed, high in calories and lacking in nutrients.
Score: -£800

Processed meat Loaded with salt, fat and artificial additives.
Score: -£900

Doughnuts The sugars and fats tax the liver and promote weight gain.
Score: -£700

French fries They absorb more fat than usual. Try sweet potato wedges.
Score: -£700