Consumers cutting back on 'luxuries' and relying on essentials in 2013

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- **A fifth complain that it is due to pay freezes (21%)**

New research* from VoucherCodes.co.uk reveals the squeeze on the nation's finances has seriously changed consumers' shopping habits. The leading shopping website discovered many Brits have hugely cut back on non-essential purchases, despite the fact they would have paid for similar items without a second thought in pre-crunch Britain.

These purchases cover a wide variety of items, ranging from day to day goods like cinema tickets (19 per cent), to larger one-off purchases like upgrading a car (20 per cent). The areas the nation has had to reign in their spending most include:

- New clothes: 42 per cent
- Dining out at a restaurant: 30 per cent
- New furnishings for the home: 29 per cent
- Expensive groceries: 27 per cent
- Weekend away / holiday: 23 per cent

When asked why their spending habits changed after the recession hit in 2008, the main reason was simply the continuous rise in the cost of living, with a third of Brits complaining everything is too expensive now (33 per cent). Stagnant incomes also seem to compound the problem as a further fifth blaming pay freezes (21 per cent), while one in 10 attribute blame their lack of cash on hikes in household bills and high housing costs.

VoucherCodes.co.uk found higher-salary households are also being pushed into reducing basic purchases. For example, 37 per cent of workers earning £50,000 - £60,000 (per annum) only buy new clothes when they absolutely must and a quarter cut back out expensive groceries (26 per cent). However, the divide between high incomes and middle Britain becomes clearer when it comes to luxuries. For instance, only 15 per cent of high earners feel they have to seriously consider the implications of paying for a holiday before splashing out.

Duncan Jennings, co-founder of VoucherCodes.co.uk comments: "It is worrying to see how households have been backed into a corner and now need to deliberate over even small purchases like a meal out or a cinema ticket. But while consumers have had to adjust to living within their means, this does not have to mean reigning in all expenses and lowering their quality of life.

"By taking some time to browse online for discounts and deals, savvy shoppers can still treat themselves to some nonessential spending without breaking the bank. Using voucher code sites can cut the costs on everything ranging from holidays, cheap meals out at the nation's favourite restaurants and shopping with the leading retailers and quality brands.

"There is no doubt that over the past five years, consumers have been struggling in an uphill battle against the rising cost of living. But by shopping smartly and joining the online voucher revolution, households can enjoy significant savings."

Notes to editors:

* Research of 2,000 Britons aged over 18yrs was carried out by One Poll between 15th to 18th February.