Taking the Temperature

Report of Age Scotland's energy survey of the over 50s

Summer 2022

In partnership with SGN

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Age Scotland commissioned independent research, in partnership with SGN, to gain insight into the views and perceptions of older people on topics related to energy use, energy efficiency and safety.

The study was managed by independent research company Scotinform Ltd, which has had significant experience of working with Age Scotland for several years.

In the following sections of this report we detail the findings from 1015 responses received from older people across Scotland.

1.2 Aims and objectives

The main aim of the study was to capture details of domestic energy use amongst residents of Scotland aged 50+.

Objectives associated with the study aimed to capture:

- How older people pay their fuel bills
- Any concerns they had about fuel bills and rising prices of household energy
- Awareness of energy schemes and advice services
- Ease of communicating with energy suppliers
- Awareness of the Priority Services Register
- Awareness of the OFGEM Price Cap
- Uptake of carbon monoxide alarms, fire/smoke alarms and interlinked alarms

1.3 Reporting

Throughout this report please note the following

- ‘Respondents’ refers to those who completed a survey
- Where percentages do not add up to 100%, this is due to no-responses.
- Where percentages exceed 100%, this is due to multiple responses.
- Open-ended feedback from respondents which has been captured throughout the survey is identified with 

2. Methodology and Sample

2.1 Methodology

The survey was designed in collaboration with Age Scotland and SGN.

Age Scotland distributed the link to the online survey and paper versions of the survey via its online channels and networks. The paper survey featured Scotinform's Freepost address which meant that postage costs were not incurred by respondents wishing to complete a paper version of the questionnaire.

An incentive was included in the survey to boost the response rate. At the end of the survey respondents were asked if they wished to take part in a free prize draw to be one of three respondents to win £50 cash.

2.2 Sample

1015 completed questionnaires were returned by the deadline of 12 July 2022 and 365 of these were complete on paper. A full profile of those who participated in the survey is featured in Section 3 of this report.

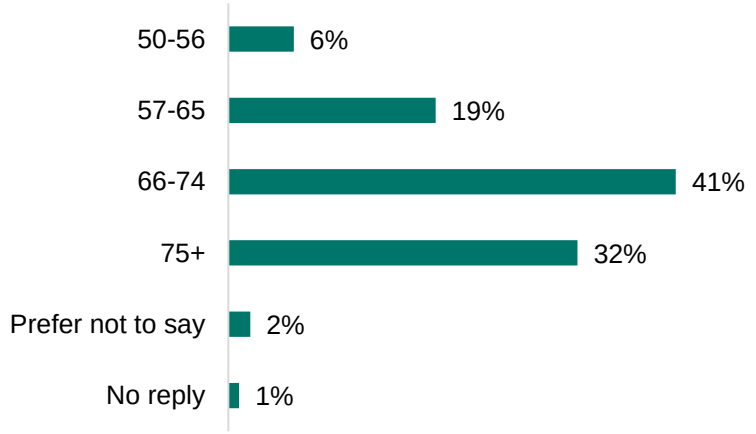
3. Profile of respondents

3.1 Gender and age

Approximately a third of respondents (36%) were male and a further 60% were female. This reflects the most recent study conducted on behalf of Age Scotland focussing on property adaptations.

The majority of respondents to the Age Scotland/SGN survey were aged 66+: 51% were aged 66-74 and 32% aged 75+. Again, this is similar to the findings of the Adaptations study.

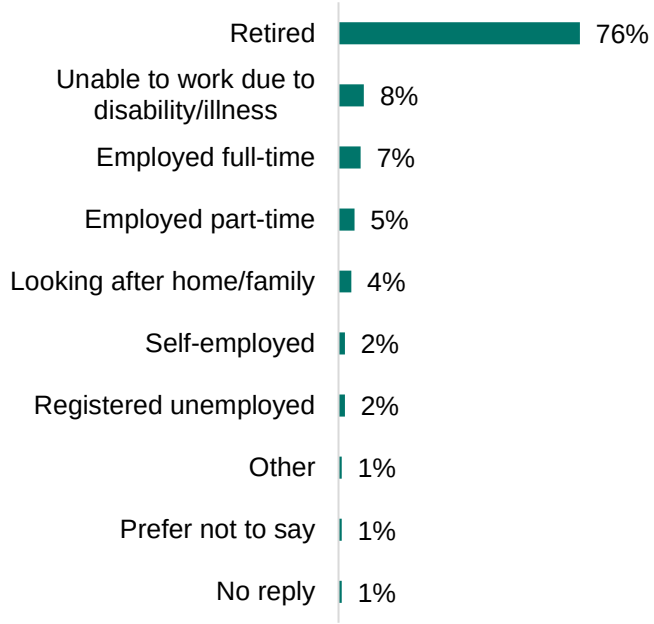
Chart 3.1: Age of respondents
Base = all respondents (1015)



3.2 Employment status

Reflecting the age profile of respondents, three quarters (76%) were retired. 17% of respondents were in employment (full-time, part-time and self-employed) with 8% unable to work due to disability/illness.

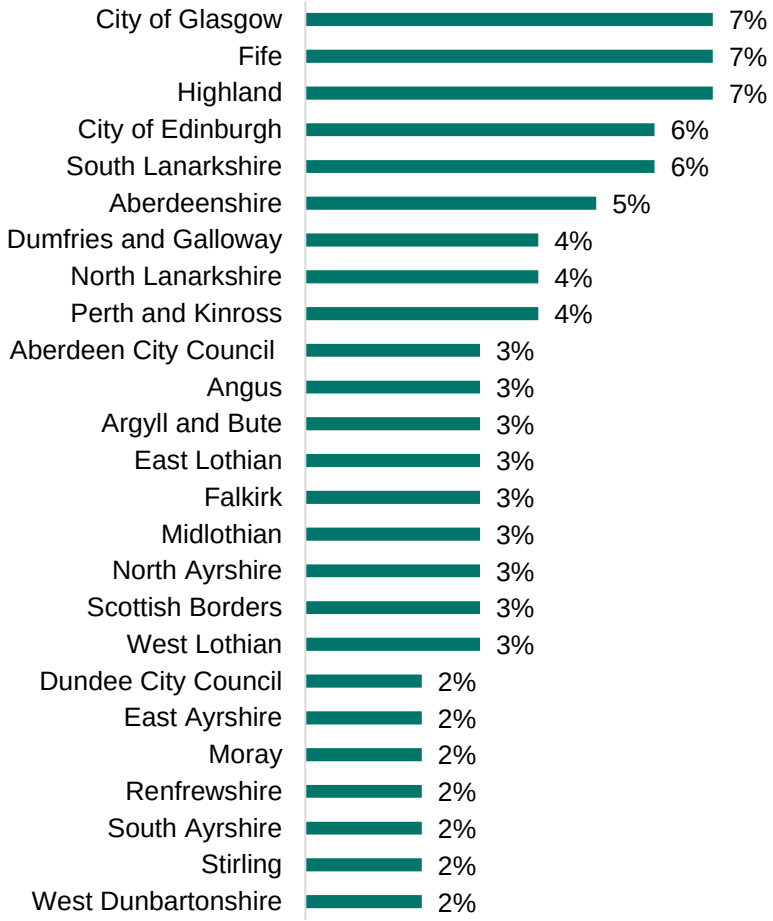
Chart 3.2: Employment status
Base = all respondents (1015)



3.3 Place of residence

All of Scotland's 32 local authorities were represented in the sample. Chart 3.3 reports those local authorities where more than 1% of the sample were residents.

Chart 3.3: Place of residence
Base = all respondents (1015)

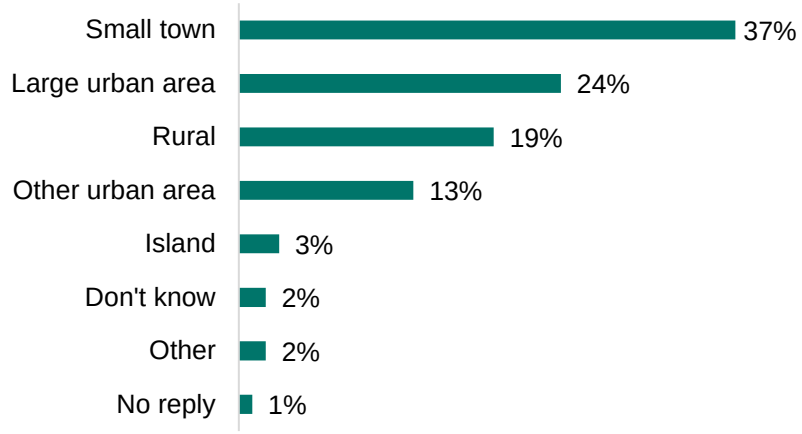


1% of respondents respectively were residents of Clackmannanshire, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, East

Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Orkney Islands and Shetland Islands.

A third of respondents (37%) considered themselves to be residents of a small town and 24% lived in a large urban area.

Chart 3.4: Type of area
Base = all respondents (1015)



3.4 Ethnicity

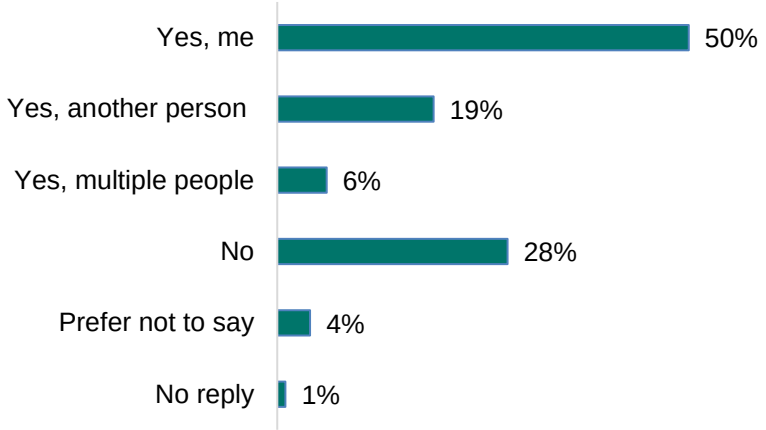
75% of respondents were 'White Scottish', 20% were 'White Other British' and 2% were from an 'Other White Background'.

Nine respondents were from a non-White background: three were from a mixed or multiple ethnic group, three were Asian, two were from an 'other ethnic group' and one was Caribbean or Black.

3.5 Disabilities

Half the sample (50%) stated that they had a long standing health problem or disability and 19% lived in a home where someone else had a health problem or disability.

Chart 3.5: Long standing health problem or disability
Base = all respondents (1015)



1% of the respondents said that they were living with dementia and 4% were living in a household with someone else living with the condition.

3.6 Homelessness

7% of respondents had been homeless.

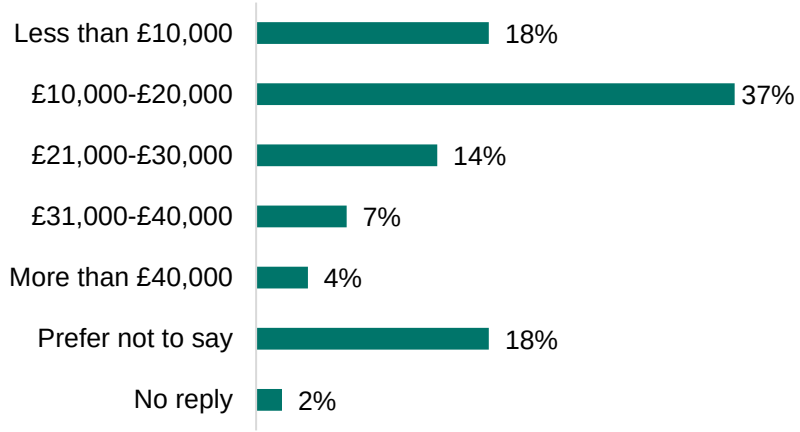
3.7 Veterans

9% of respondents were veterans (including national service) and 3% lived in a household with someone who was a veteran.

3.8 Household income

Over half the sample (55%) lived in a household with a total gross annual income of less than £20,000. Of note is that a fifth of respondents (20%) provided no response to this question.

Chart 3.6: Total gross annual income
Base = all respondents (1015)

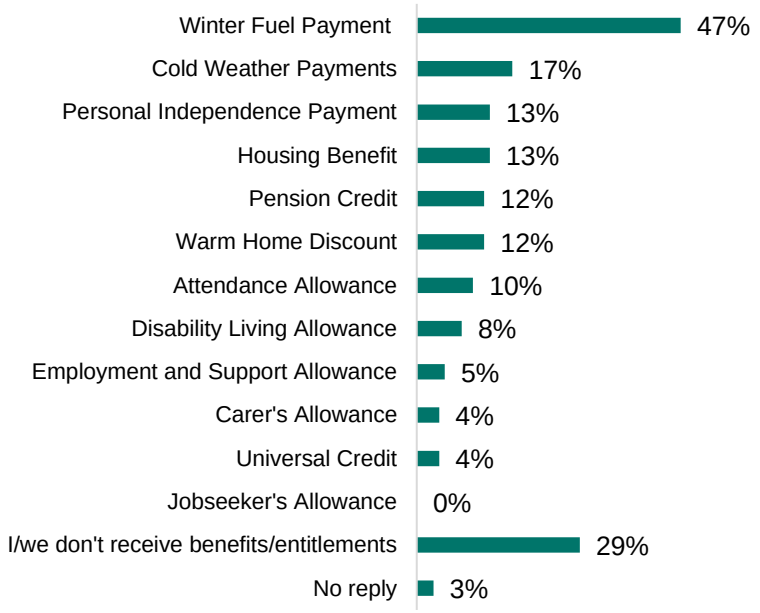


3.9 State Pension and Benefits

70% of respondents were in receipt of the State Pension and 26% were living with a partner who was in receipt of this.

47% of respondents were in receipt of Winter Fuel Payment and 17% received Cold Weather Payments. Over a quarter (29%) were not in receipt of any of the benefits or entitlements with which they were prompted. Of note is that 27% of respondents aged 66-74 and 14% aged 75+ stated that they were not in receipt of any benefits/entitlements.

Chart 3.7: Benefits and entitlements
Base = all respondents (1015)

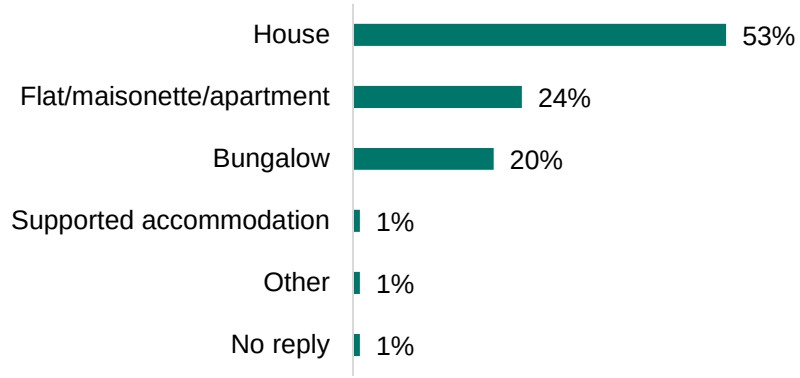


4. Property and household

4.1 Type of home

The majority of respondents (53%) lived in a house and a further 24% in a flat/maisonette/apartment.

Chart 4.1: Type of home
Base = all respondents (1015)

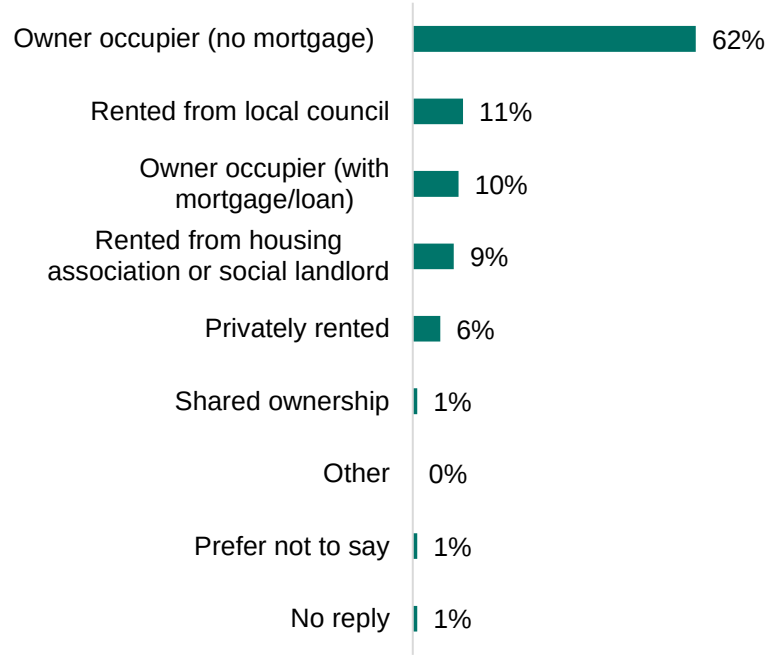


4.2 Paying for home

62% of respondents were owner occupiers with no mortgage on their properties and a further 10% were paying for their home with a mortgage/loan.

The remainder of respondents were renting their homes – 11% from their local council and 9% from a housing association or social landlord. 6% were renting privately.

Chart 4.2: Paying for home
Base = all respondents (1015)



4.3 Monthly cost of owning/renting

39% of respondents were paying £300 or less each month in terms of owning/renting their home once rent/mortgage payment plus regular management or maintenance costs were included. A further 42%, however, were paying £301 or more on a monthly basis.

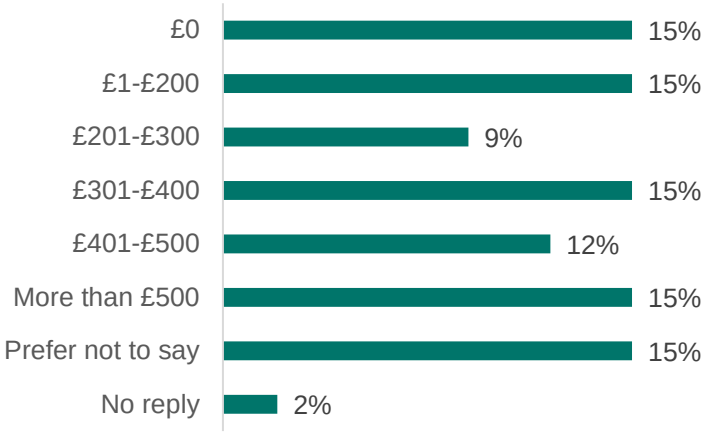
34% of respondents who were owner occupiers with a mortgage/loan were paying £500+ each month along with

36% of respondents who were privately renting.

8% of respondents who were renting from their local council and 16% who were renting from a housing association or social landlord had outgoings of £500+ per month linked to their home.

Of note, is that 13% of respondents with a total gross annual income of less than £10,000 were paying £500+ each month for owning/renting their home once rent/mortgage payment plus regular management or maintenance costs were included.

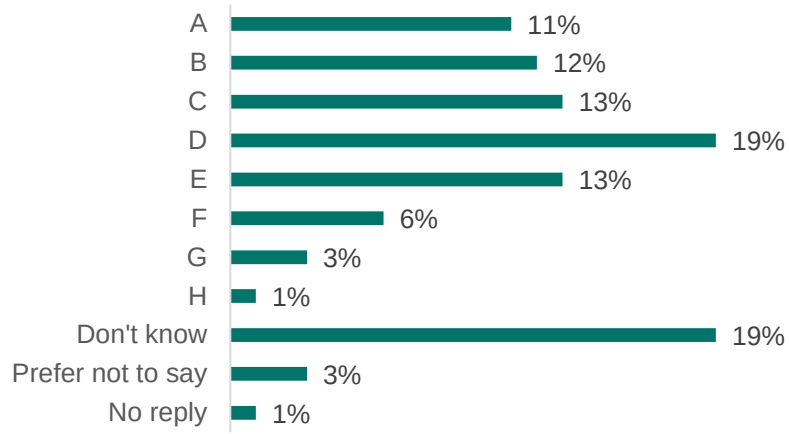
Chart 4.3: Monthly cost of renting/owning
Base = all respondents (1015)



4.4 Council Tax Band

A quarter of respondents (24%) provided no response to a question asking in which Council Tax Band[1] their home belonged. Of those who did provide a response, 19% lived in Council Tax Band D and 13% each in Council Tax Bands C and E.

Chart 4.4: Council Tax Band
Base = all respondents (1015)



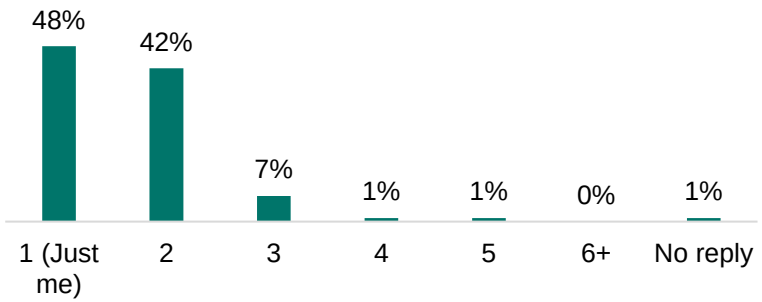
4.5 Number of people in household

48% of respondents lived alone with 42% living with one other person. 56% of respondents aged 75+ lived on their own and

[1] https://www.saa.gov.uk/council-tax/council-tax-bands/

36% lived with one other person.

Chart 4.5: Number of people in household
Base = all respondents (1015)



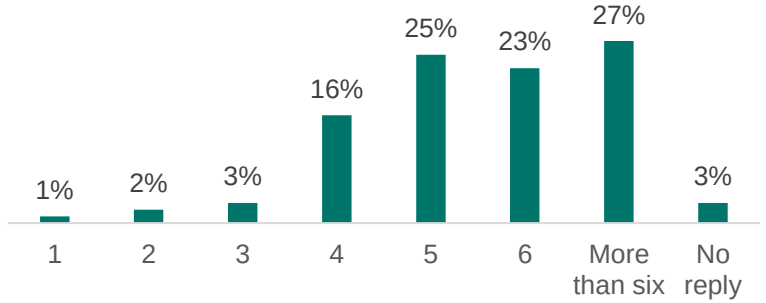
4.6 Number of rooms in property

Over a quarter of respondents (27%) lived in a home with more than six rooms which included their kitchen and bathroom/s.

Of note is that 6% of respondents lived in a property with three or fewer rooms.

19% of respondents who lived alone lived in a property with six rooms and 18% lived in a property with 6+ rooms.

Chart 4.6: Number of rooms
Base = all respondents (1015)



4.7 Energy efficient measures

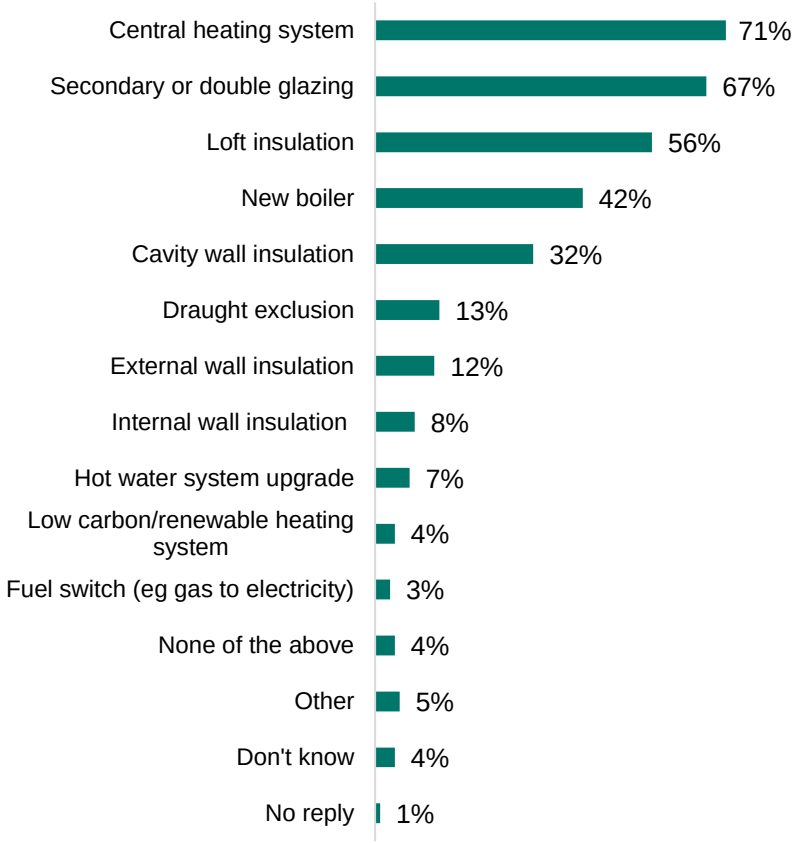
Respondents were asked what energy efficient measures they had installed in their home.

Respondents were most likely to have a central heating system (71%), secondary or double glazing (67%) and loft insulation (56%).

4% of respondents had a low carbon/renewable heating system and 3% had made a fuel switch.

Respondents who lived in a property in which they were owner-occupiers (paying with or without a mortgage) were more likely to have installed energy efficient measures than those whose homes were rented. This highlights that those owner occupiers have more control over what changes and additions they make to their homes in comparison with those who rent.

Chart 4.7: Energy efficient measures
Base = all respondents (1015)

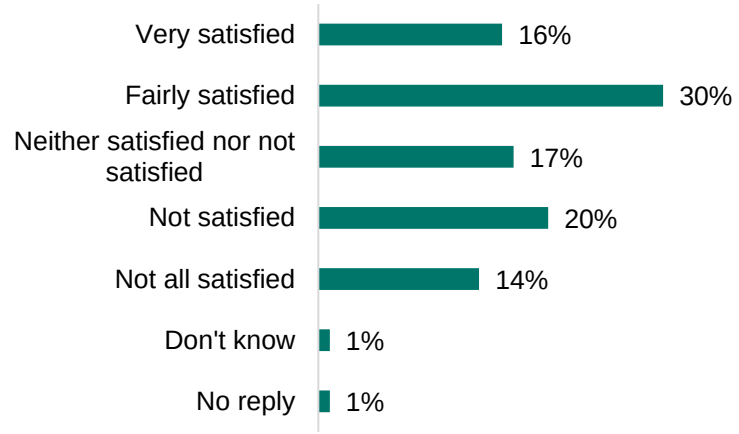


4.8 Comfortable level of heating

16% of respondents were very satisfied that they could heat their home to a comfortable level which suited their needs and 30% were fairly satisfied that this was the case. A third of respondents (34%), however, were not satisfied and not at all satisfied that they could heat their home to a satisfactory level.

21% of respondents with a total gross annual income of less than £10,000 were not satisfied and 23% were not at all satisfied that they could heat their home to a comfortable level.

Chart 4.8: Comfortable level of heating
Base = all respondents (1015)

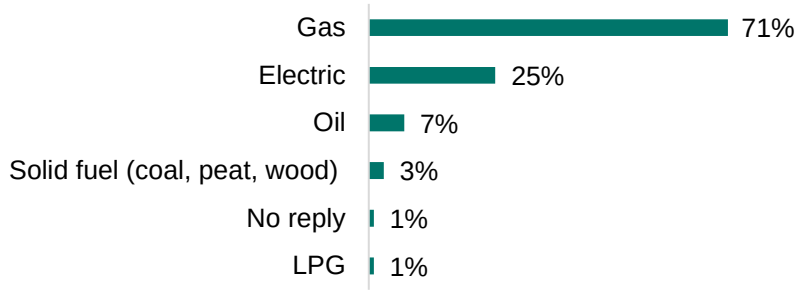


5. Paying energy bills

5.1 Primary heat source

Gas was the primary heat source for 71% of respondents, with 25% citing electricity as their primary means of heating their home.

Chart 5.1: Primary heat source
Base = all respondents (1015)



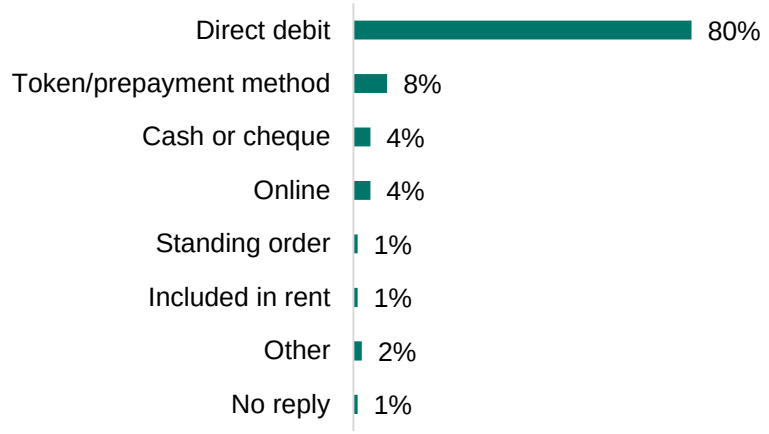
5.2 Paying for heating

Respondents were asked how they paid their bills, how frequently and how much, on average, they paid each time.

5.2.1 Gas

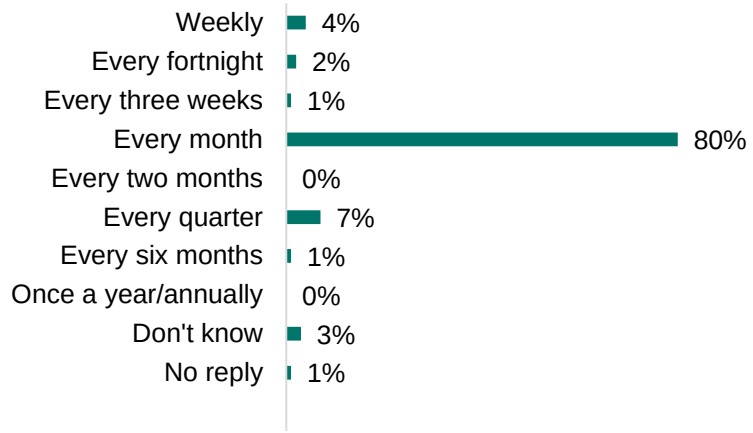
80% of the respondents for whom gas was their primary heat source paid their bill by direct debit. 8% paid using a token/prepayment method and 4% were using cash or cheque. Just 4% were paying online.

Chart 5.2: Payment of gas bill
Base = all respondents for whom gas is their primary heat source (718)



Respondents most likely paid their gas bill monthly (80%) with 7% paying every quarter.

Chart 5.3: Frequency of paying gas bill
Base = all respondents for whom gas is their primary heat source (718)



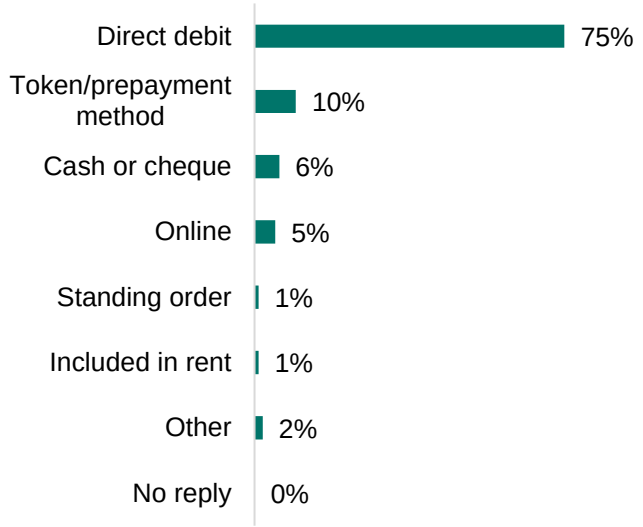
515 gas customers provided details of how much they paid, on average, each time they paid their gas bill. 438 provided details of the amount they paid each month and this worked out as an average of £114.37 per month. For those paying quarterly (25 respondents provided figures) the average bill was £195.56 per quarter.

5.2.2 Electric

In keeping with respondents who paid their gas bill by direct debit, the majority of respondents (75%) for whom electricity was their primary source also paid using this method.

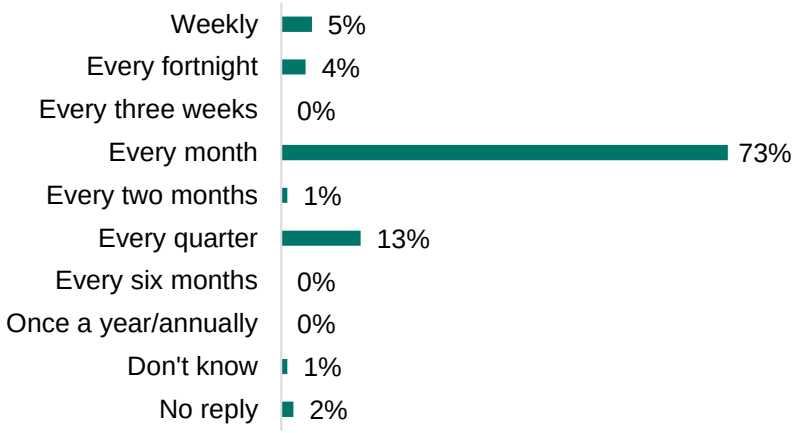
10% paid their electric bill using a token/prepayment method and 6% by cheque.

Chart 5.4: Payment of electric bill
Base = all respondents for whom electricity is their primary heat source (249)



The majority of respondents (73%) paid their electric bill on a monthly basis and 13% every quarter.

Chart 5.5: Frequency of paying electric bill
Base = all respondents for whom electricity is their primary heat source (249)

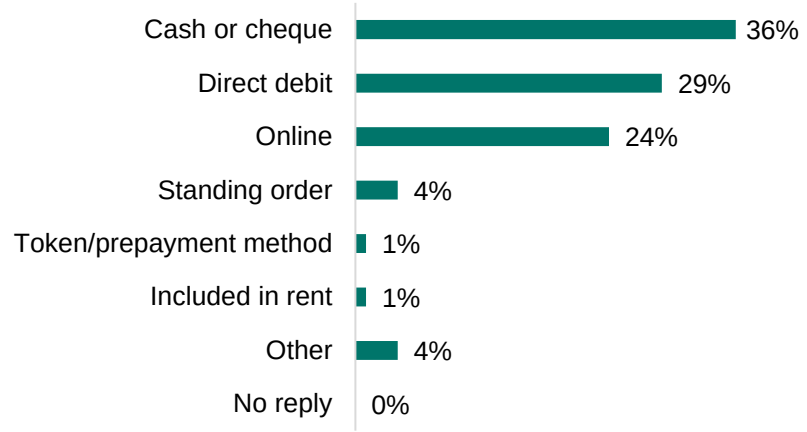


183 electricity customers provided details of how much they paid, on average, each time they paid their gas bill. For those paying monthly (144 provided figures) the average bill was £175 per month and for those paying quarterly (17 respondents provided figures) the average bill was £378.64 per quarter.

5.2.3 Oil

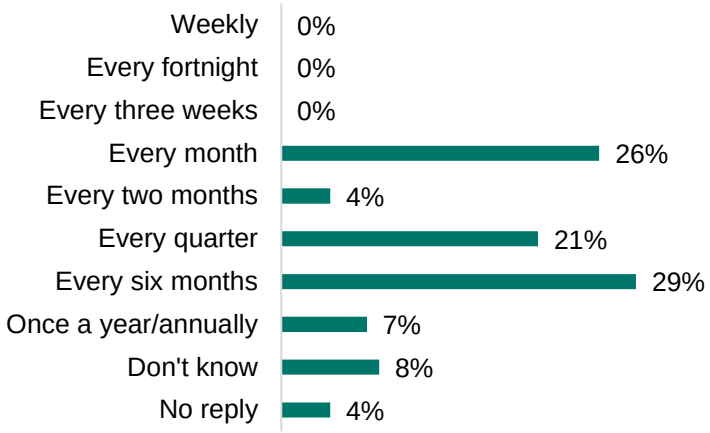
The 72 respondents whose primary heat source was oil were more likely paying their bill by cash or cheque (36%). A further 29% paid by direct debit and 24% paid online.

Chart 5.6: Payment of oil bill
Base = all respondents for whom oil is their primary heat source (72)



29% of respondents who used oil were paying their bill every six months, 26% paid monthly and 21% quarterly.

Chart 5.7: Frequency of paying oil bill
Base = all respondents for whom oil is their primary heat source (72)



Sixteen respondents provided details of their monthly bill which averaged at £236.87 per month. Twelve respondents provided details of their quarterly payments for oil which averaged at £491.66 per quarter.

5.2.4 Solid fuel

Twenty-six respondents cited solid fuel as their primary heat source. Eighteen paid their bill using cash or cheque and three paid online. One respondent used direct debit and token/prepayment method to pay their solid fuel bills.

The timing of payment of bills varied significantly across this group:

- Two paid weekly
- Six paid every fortnight
- Four paid every month
- Two paid every two months
- One paid every quarter
- One paid every six months
- Six paid annually and
- Four didn't know the frequency with which they paid their solid fuel bills.

5.2.5 LPG

Fifteen respondents cited LPG as their primary heat source. Nine paid their bill via direct debit, two paid using cash or cheque, two paid online and one paid via standing order.

Five of the LPG customers paid every month, three every quarter, one every two months and one every six months.

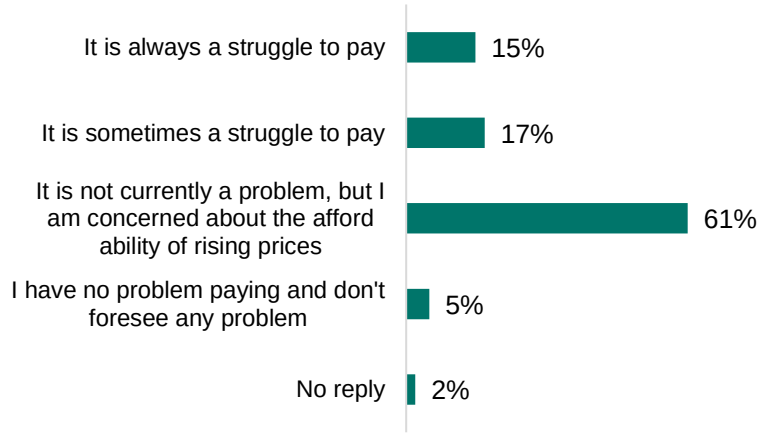
5.3 Experience of paying fuel bills

All respondents were asked which of a series of statements best described their experience of paying fuel bills.

61% selected '*it's not currently a problem, but I am concerned about the affordability of rising prices'*. 15% of respondents agreed with '*it is always a struggle to pay'* and 17% agreed with '*it is sometimes a struggle to pay'*.

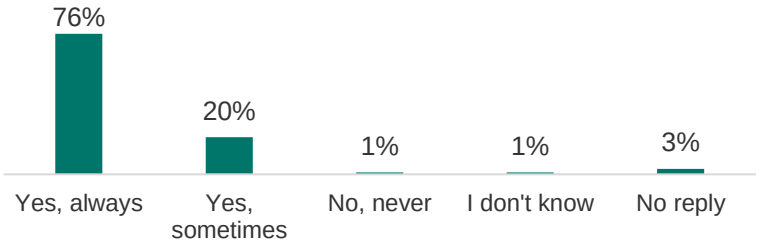
33% of respondents with a total gross annual income of less than £10,000 stated that it was always a struggle to pay and 25% said it was sometimes a struggle to pay.

Chart 5.8: Experience of paying fuel bills
Base = all respondents (1015)



Three quarters of respondents (76%) were always concerned about the rising prices of household energy and 20% were sometimes concerned. Clearly this is an issue which is on the minds of older people.

Chart 5.9: Concerns about rising fuel bills
Base = all respondents (1015)



Respondents were asked, via an open-ended question, how the rising cost of household energy had affected them. 718 respondents provided a response which, once analysed, identified the following themes:

- 211 were cutting back on heating and hot water which was impacting on many respondents' lifestyles ie going to bed earlier, spending more time in just one room which was heated etc.
- 97 had already experienced increased fuel bills.
- 86 comments highlighted the mental anxiety increased fuel bills were causing with the use of such words as terrified, scared, anxiety and worry.
- 77 respondents had not yet experienced increased fuel bills but were concerned about what would happen once their fixed deal contract expired.
- 72 respondents were cutting back on other essentials including food and fuel with the latter of particular

importance to those living in rural areas.

- 42 respondents had health problems and/or lived with someone who had health problems (ie recovering from a stroke, dementia, Parkinsons, cancer, arthritis) and for whom being in a warm environment was important.
- 41 respondents noted that they were no longer able to afford 'treats' and 'luxuries' such as going out, treating the grandchildren etc.
- 21 respondents had less money to spend and less disposable income generally.
- 19 respondents were worried about the financial impact of increased fuel bills on their finance generally.
- 18 respondents commented on the fact that they lived on a fixed income/had a fixed pension neither of which were increasing in line with fuel bills.
- 12 respondents were watching their fuel consumption more than they ever had.
- 12 respondents were dipping into their savings (which were unlikely to be replenished) to pay their fuel bills.

'Previously our gas monthly direct debit was £89. The company want to increase it to £177 per month. ThIs is a worry.'

'My bill has gone from £77 to £220 in the past few months, I was looking to retire but fuel prices will stop me doing this.'

'I am now very worried about it my dual fuel payment has gone up from £197.00 to £405.00 per month. I was okay before but I don't know how I am going to afford this new payment.'

'More aware of the energy we use and try to cut down. Cut back on food, buy cheaper brands. Less disposable income, dread the winter bills.'

'It was a shock to see my monthly bill go up by 91%. I have dipped into reserve money to pay for this.'

'I have to turn the heating off, wear more clothes if it's cold, do washing in the machine after 8 pm on quicker wash use microwave and pressure cooker more instead of the oven.'

'I have delayed full retirement as I cannot afford my housing costs with the rise in the cost of living. I am now considering having to sell my home to downsize and reduce costs. I only heat one room now. I have also reduced the amount of cooking I do to use less gas - eating cold foods and so on.'

'I wear extra clothing, I economise on keeping things clean as hot water is a major expense. I have beans on toast more often and fish suppers hardly ever.'

'I stopped using my heating in May 2022. I only use one lamp in the evening, have stopped making bread and scones and wear a fleece dressing gown with a

blanket when I sit in the evening. When I boil a kettle I make a flask of coffee as well as a cup of coffee. I am not looking forward to the winter and having to be more frugal.'

'Made me very stressed, after losing my husband at the end of March, really struggling to cope. My income has gone down to such a degree, don't know how I am going to cope this winter. Have tried to get Pension Credit etc, but even that's not straightforward, just living off my State Pension. Only so-called gain, is getting 80 pence (per month) from my husband's State Pension, which is not going to help me exist!'

'The increase means I had to cut back on food and often go for weeks with no food. It's making me unwell.'

'I can no longer afford to catch a bus anywhere or even get half decent food. i am already using food banks and get free meals twice a week from "Food for Scotland.'

'Sit in one room morning. Put disabled wife to bed after carers & nurses at 13.00.'

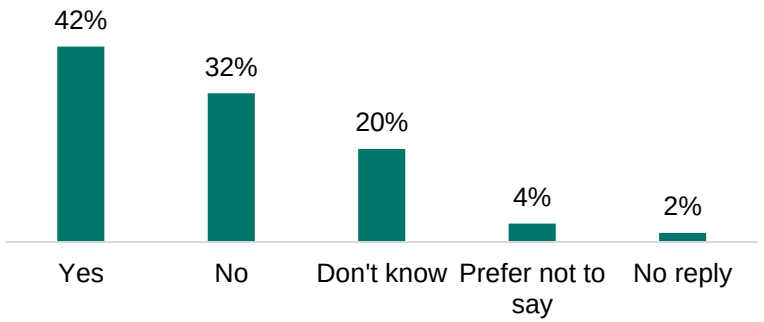
'On a fixed income all the horrible rising prices and inflation, and declining mental ability to search out better deals, makes us worry about what the future holds for us.'

5.4 Fuel Poverty

In Scotland, people are considered to be fuel poverty if they spend more than 10% of their household income in paying for energy costs to maintain an acceptable standard of living.

Given this description, respondents were asked if they considered themselves to be living in a fuel poor household. Of note is that 42% of respondents considered themselves to be in fuel poverty whilst a fifth (20%) were unsure if this was the case.

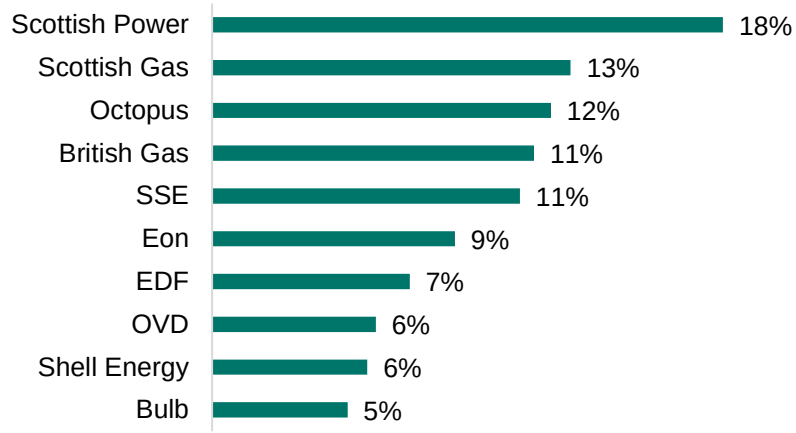
Chart 5.10: Fuel poverty
Base = all respondents (1015)



6. Energy suppliers

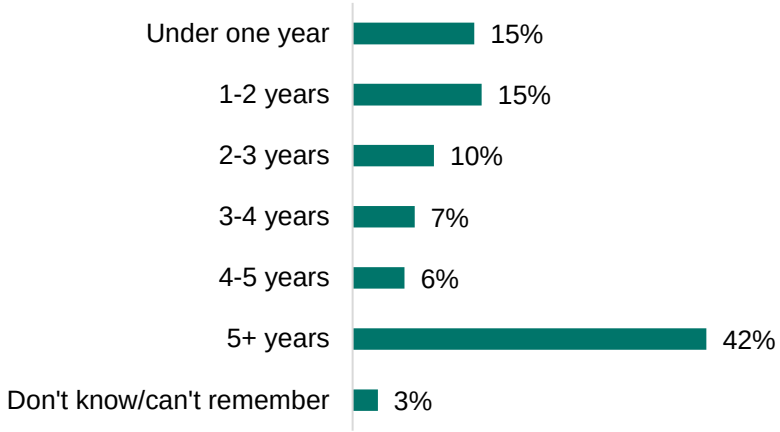
998 of the respondents identified the energy suppliers they used. A list of 41 suppliers was provided but the top ten are presented in Chart 6.1 below. 18% of respondents were customer of Scottish Power and 13% were with Scottish Gas.

Chart 6.s1: Energy suppliers
Base = all respondents who provided details of energy suppliers (998)



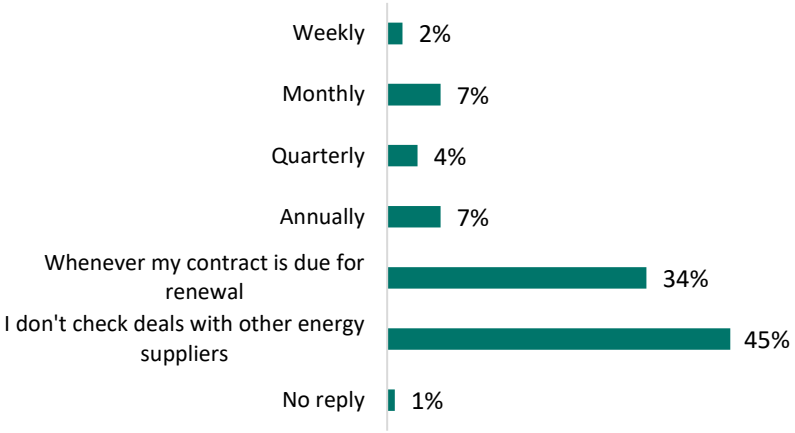
42% of respondents had been with their main energy supplier for 5+ years suggesting that respondents are not seeking out new deals with other energy suppliers. This is borne out in Chart 6.3 on page 18.

Chart 6.2: Length of time with energy supplier
Base = all respondents who provided details of energy suppliers (998)



45% of respondents did not check deals with other suppliers and 34% only did so when their contact was due for renewal. Clearly, respondents are not proactive in seeking out competitive energy offers and may require signposting to encourage this.

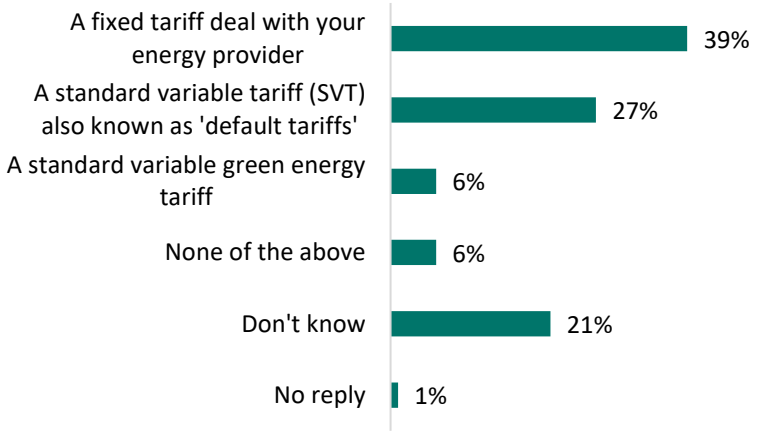
Chart 6.3: Frequency of checking energy deals
Base = all respondents who provided details of energy suppliers (998)



7. Energy tariffs

Respondents were asked if they were currently on a specific energy tariff. 39% of respondents were on a fixed deal with their energy provider but, of interest, is that over a fifth (21%) did not know on which energy tariff they were.

Chart 7.1: Energy tariff
Base = all respondents (1015)



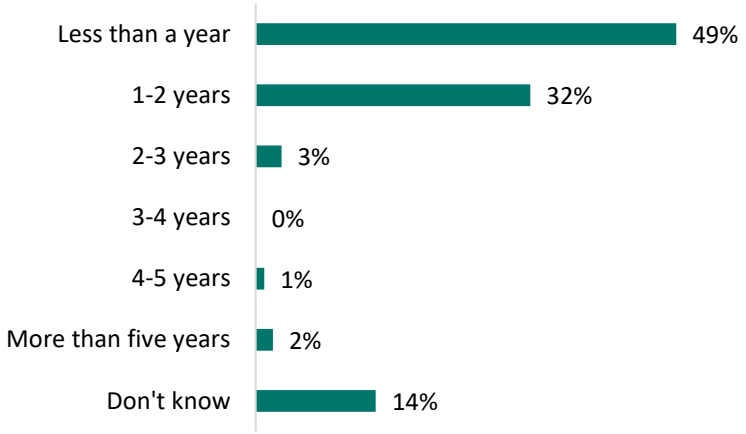
7.1 Fixed deal

Approximately half the respondents (49%) had less than a year left on their fixed deal and 32% had 1-2 years left. 14% of respondents were unsure.

68% of those on a fixed deal has previously stated (see Chart

5.8) that paying fuel bills was not currently a problem but they were concerned about the affordability of rising prices.

Chart 7.2: Fixed tariff deal respondents
Base = all respondents on a fixed tariff deal (400)

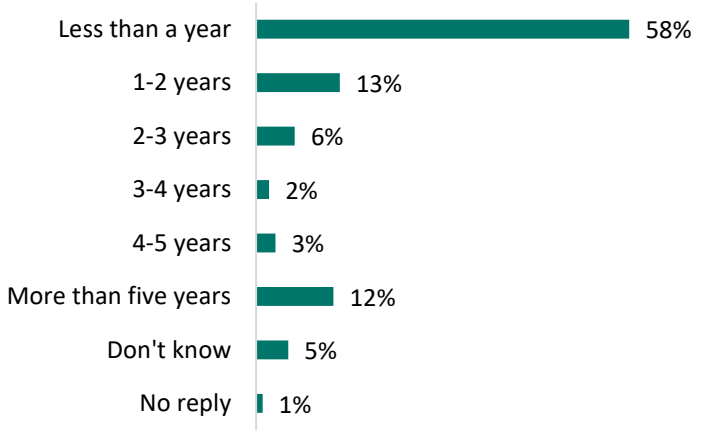


7.2 Standard variable tariff (SVT)

277 respondents were currently on a standard variable tariff also known as ‘default tariffs’.

58% of respondents had been on a SVT for less than a year and 13% for 1-2 years.

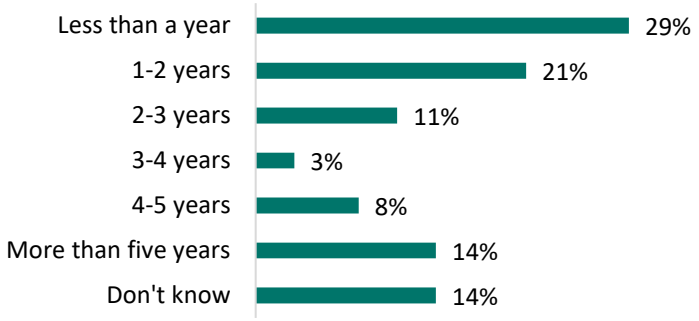
Chart 7.3: Standard variable tariff
Base = all respondents on a SVT (277)



7.3 Standard variable green energy tariff

29% of the 63 respondents on a standard variable green energy tariff had been on this scheme for less than one year and 21% for 1-2 years.

Chart 7.4: Standard variable green energy tariff
Base = all respondents on standard variable green energy tariff (63)



7.4 Contact from energy supplier

70% of the respondents who were not currently on any of the three tariffs with which they were prompted had not been contacted by their energy supplier about any of them. 11% had been contacted about a fixed tariff deal, 2% about a SVT and 2% about a standard variable green energy tariff.

7.5 Switching energy supplier

Three quarters of respondents (76%) had not, in the past 12 months, been switched or switched voluntarily due to their energy supplier going out of business. 2% had decided to switch and 15% were switched automatically.

8. Energy schemes

8.1 Sources of information

Respondents were asked which, of a series of sources, they had approached for information about household energy efficiency and which they would use in the future. Respondents were most likely to have approached Home Energy Scotland for information. 11% of respondents had approached Age Scotland for information and 27% hadn't as yet approached Age Scotland but would use in the future. Of note is the high percentage of no responses to this question.

Table 8.1: Sources of information
Base = all respondents (1015)

	Have approached for information	Haven't approached but would use in future	Haven't used and would not approach	No response
	%	%	%	%
Home Energy Scotland	17	27	18	38
Energy provider	16	26	16	42
Family/friends	15	17	22	46
Age Scotland	11	27	19	44
Scottish Government	7	23	26	44
Energy Savings Trust	9	25	19	47
Citizens Advice Bureau	6	20	24	50
Local Council	5	19	26	50
Local groups/networks	4	16	27	53
Library	1	13	31	55
GP surgery	1	10	34	56

Sources of information mentioned, unprompted, by 44 respondents included: the internet/internet searches (46), Martin Lewis/MSE website (31), social media, including Twitter and Facebook (12), national news/press including online (ten), comparison websites (nine) and TV/TV news/TV adverts (six). Specific organisations included Age Scotland (two), SCARF (two), THAW Orkney (two), Energy Advice Scotland (one), Energy Broker Dundee (one), Home Energy Scotland (one), Trust Housing Association (one), Veterans' Housing Association (one), Warm Connections in Aberfeldy (one), Warm Works (one).

8.2 Energy schemes

67% of respondents were not aware of any schemes available from their energy supplier to help support them with energy costs.

The questionnaire featured as series of energy schemes and respondents were asked which they had heard of and which they had used. Respondents were most likely to have heard of the Warm Home Discount (37%) and used this scheme (20%). There was very low awareness of any of the other schemes with which respondents were prompted. Once again, there was a high level of no responses to this question.

Table 8.2: Energy schemes
Base = all respondents (1015)

	Heard of but not used	Heard of and used	Neither heard of nor used	No response
	%	%	%	%
Warm Home Discount	37	20	30	13
Scottish Power Hardship Fund	14	1	52	32
British Gas Energy Trust	12	1	53	34
Ovo Energy Fund	7	1	57	36
E.ON Energy Fund	7	1	57	36
E.ON Next Energy Fund	6	1	57	36
EDF Energy Customer Support Fund	7	1	57	35

8.3 Energy schemes/advice services

Respondents were then asked if they had heard of or used any schemes/advice services intended to improve a home's energy efficiency.

There was higher awareness of the Home Energy Scotland advice service (26%) than any of the other schemes/advice services with which respondents had been prompted. 61% of respondents were unaware of the Scottish Gas Networks Help to Heat Scheme despite the fact that 71% of respondents stated that gas was their primary heat source. There were high levels of no response to this question.

Table 8.3: Energy schemes/advice services
Base = all respondents (1015)

	Heard of but not used	Heard of and used	Neither heard of nor used	No response
	%	%	%	%
Home Energy Scotland advice service	26	12	47	16
Scottish Government Home Energy Efficiency for Scotland: Warmer Homes Scotland Scheme	19	5	54	23
Scottish Government Home Energy Efficiency for Scotland: Area Based Scheme	15	3	58	25
Scottish Gas Networks Help to Heat Scheme	10	1	61	27

8.4 Climate Emergency

Respondents were asked as a result of the climate emergency whether they would install/feel comfortable installing a low or zero carbon heating system in their home.

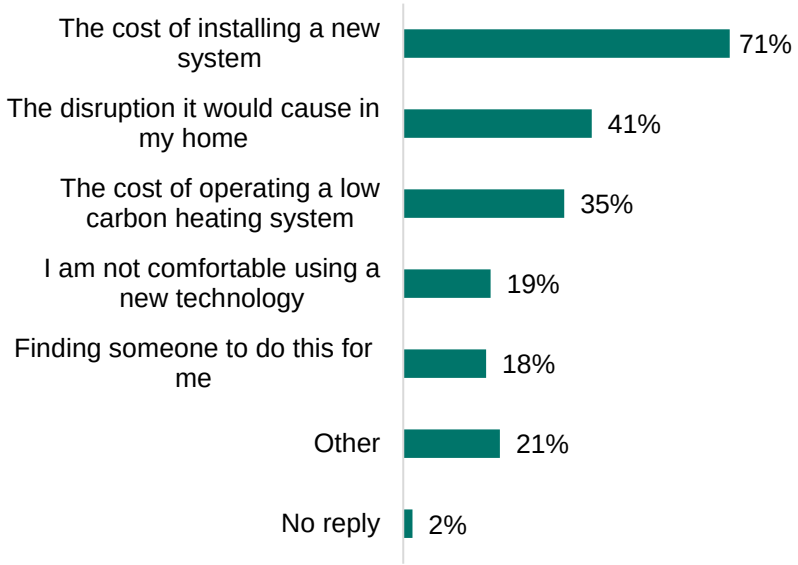
27% of respondents said they would install a low or zero carbon heating system in their home. 30% of respondents selected 'no' in response to this question and 41% chose 'don't know'.

The 302 respondents who said they wouldn't install a low or zero carbon heating system in their home were asked why this was the case.

For 71% of respondents the cost of installing a new system was clearly prohibitive and 41% did not like the fact that the installation of such a system would cause disruption in their home.

Chart 8.4: Installation of low or zero carbon heating system

Base = all respondents who would not install a low or zero carbon heating system (302)



Of those who responded 'other', 21 clarified that this was not in their control ie they lived in rented property. Other comments indicated some scepticism around climate emergency, concerns about cost and criticism about heat pumps.

'There is not a climate emergency.'

'I do not believe that changing my boiler would have a significant impact on the Climate Emergency.'

- *'Too expensive, I can barely afford what I've got.'*
- *'I am too old and don't have the money for this.'*
- *'It costs too much and be too complicated at my age which is 77.'*
- *'Heat pumps are rubbish. Coefficient of performance is barely 1 at low temperatures. I have discussed this with an engineer who maintains heat pumps.'*
- *'I had an air source heat pump and it did not suit my lifestyle and it was very expensive……'*

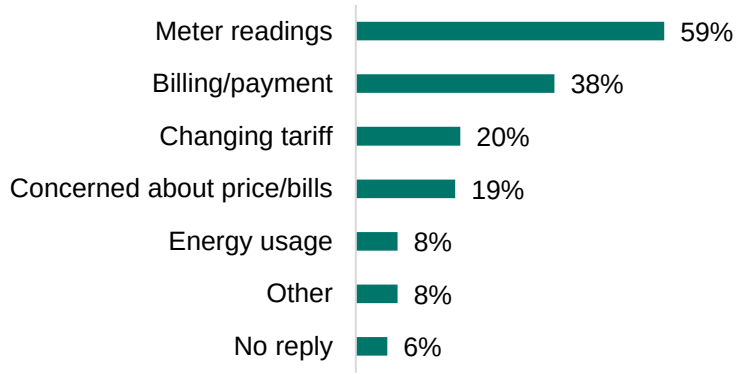
9. Communicating with energy suppliers

This section of the questionnaire asked for respondents' feedback on engagement with their energy supplier.

9.1 Reasons for contacting energy supplier

Providing meter readings was the main reason for contacting an energy supplier (59%) and 38% made contact to discuss billing/payment.

Chart 9.1: Main reason for contacting energy supplier
Base = all respondents (1015)

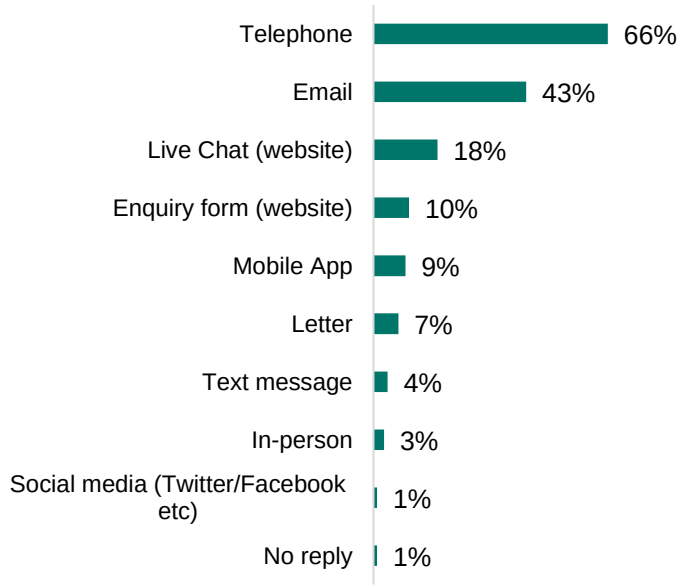


9.2 Getting in touch

46% of respondents were satisfied with the length of time it took to get in touch with their energy supplier and 34% were not.

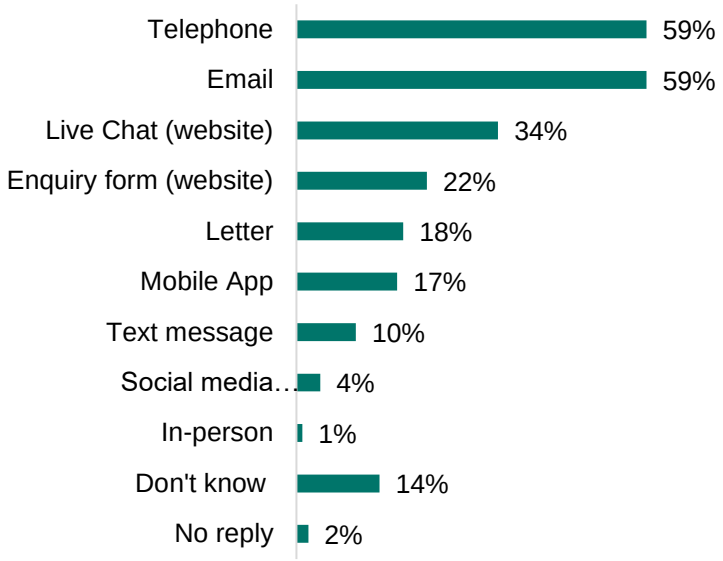
Respondents were asked what for their preferred method of getting in touch with their energy supplier. Two thirds of respondents (66%) preferred telephone contact with their energy supplier and 43% preferred email.

Chart 9.2: Preferred means of contact
Base = all respondents (1015)



Respondents were asked which communication methods their energy suppliers provided. 59% respectively selected telephone and email and 34% live chat via the website. As telephone and email are respondents' favoured communication methods (see Chart 9.2) it is good to note that these options are made available to them by their energy providers. 14% of respondents were unaware, however, what communication options were available to them.

Chart 9.3: Available communication options
Base = all respondents (1015)



Twenty-eight respondents required their energy supplier to provide accessible communication options specifically:

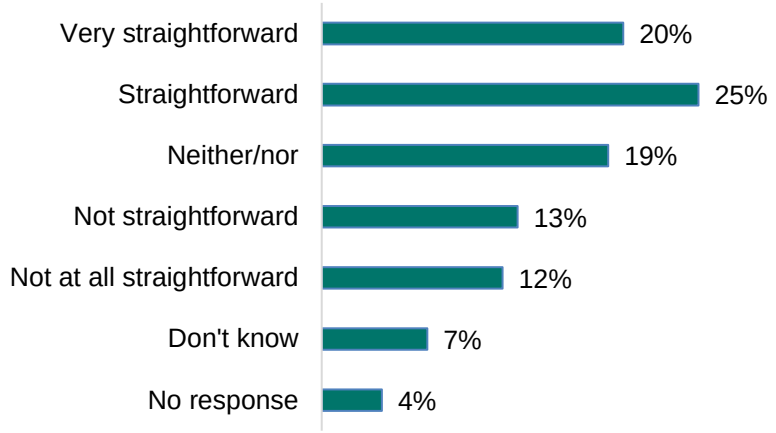
- Text to speech support - website (14 respondents)
- Audio paperwork (15)
- Language interpretation services (seven)
- Braille (four)

Six respondents stated that their energy supplier did provide the accessible communication option/s they required but 13 respondents stated that this was not the case.

9.3 Ease of making contact

Respondents were asked how straightforward they found it to make contact with their energy supplier. 45% found it 'very straightforward' and 'straightforward' to make contact whilst 25% rated the ease of contacting their energy supplier as 'not straightforward' or 'not at all straightforward'.

Chart 9.4: Ease of making contact
Base = all respondents (1015)



Comments from respondents regarding why they found making contact with their energy supplier not straightforward or not at all straightforward centred around length of time it takes to answer calls, being passed on to different departments, no consistency ie not able to speak with the same person each time, the use of automated response systems, not speaking with someone for whom English is their first language and calls not returned.

'It's difficult to speak to someone on the telephone as everything is automated and confusing to get through to actually speak to someone. The online Chat asks too many offline questions that you end up back at square one when all you actually want to do is speak

to someone.'

- *'Takes forever to answer and when you get through they do not speak very good English. I can't understand them and they can't understand me.'*
- *'Length of time in queues waiting to speak to someone, live chat is hopeless.'*
- *'Telephone, can take a long time for them to understand the problem and solve it. Can take several calls.'*
- *'There are so many 'menus' to navigate before you can get help. It is very difficult to get to speak to a person. I have complained about this every time I've had to call British Gas.'*
- *'They do not contact me about anything except to say their prices are rising.'*

When asked how the customer experience with energy suppliers could be improved, respondents felt there was a need for staff training in customer service. They would like phones answered quickly, the ability to speak to a person rather than through an automated service, speedy responses to enquiries, make bills easier to understand and reduce paperwork.

- *'Answer telephone quickly as it costs money being put on hold.'*
- *'Bills made easier to understand. Reduce complicated paperwork. Reduce the number of baffling tariffs. Simplify the whole system. Scrap the daily standing charge.'*
- *'Call centre in Scotland with well-trained staff who see issue through.'*
- *'Could be more understanding and show empathy with customer.'*
- *'Employ staff to answer the phones and deal with your query. You can cook a 3 course meal while you are on hold with these companies nowadays. Happy to take your money though. Maybe we should all stop paying our bills. See how they like that.'*
- *'Get an email or written response confirming their actions. If you complain never get acknowledgement or solution.'*
- *'Having people who understand where you live and they need to know what services are available to you, I'm fed up explain to them that i do not have any access to gas, and i do not have central heating , but a Raeburn and wood burner'*
- *'They could listen to the concerns of their customers to start with. They need to build resilience into their supply ahead of predicted high use, (which I understand is not always possible due to world events). Improve their communication within their service, which appears from the outside chaotic and invest properly in customer services. Also by being*

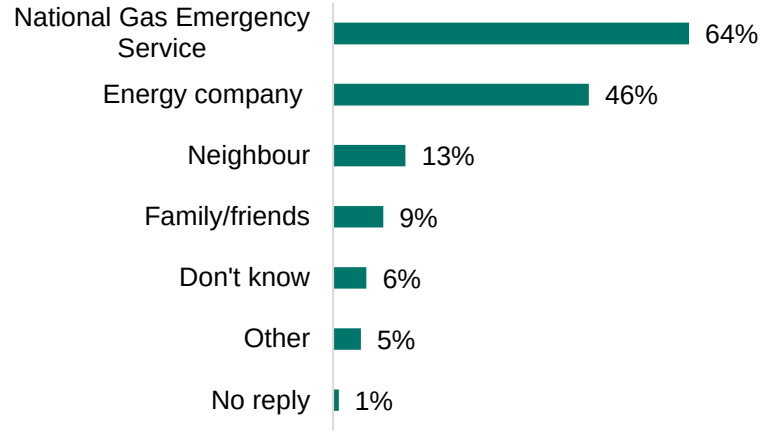
open and fair with customers when there are price increases. There seemed to be manipulation of customer supplier to squeeze out maximum profit this winter, leading to some people being left without supply. I wish I has more choice of LPG supplier in my area.'

9.4 Emergency contacts

Respondents who stated that gas was their primary heat source were asked in the event of a loss of gas to their home, or they suspected that there was a gas or carbon monoxide leak, who they would contact in the first instance for assistance.

Two thirds of respondents (64%) would contact the National Gas Emergency Service in this situation and 46% would contact their energy supplier.

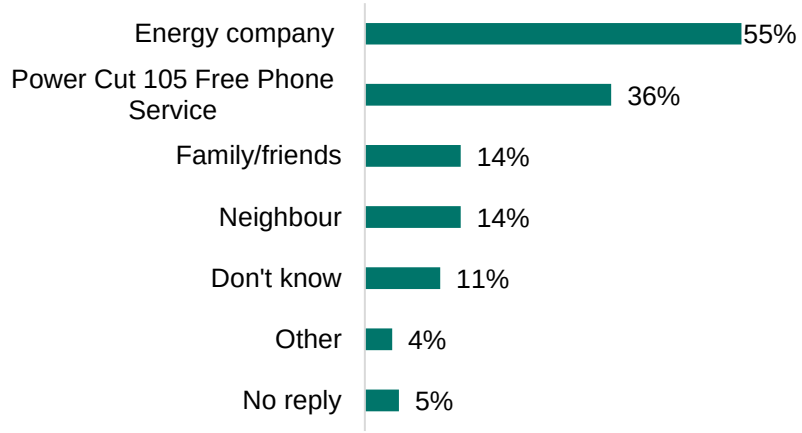
Chart 9.5: Emergency contact (gas)
Base = all respondents for whom gas was their primary heat source (718)



The same question was asked of respondents for whom electricity was their primary heat source ie who they would contact in the event of an emergency.

Over half of electricity customers (55%) would contact their energy company in the event of power loss. 36% of respondents would contact the Power Cut 105 Free Phone Service.

Chart 9.6: Emergency contact (electricity)
Base = all respondents for whom electricity was their primary heat source (249)



10. Priority Services Register

49% of respondents were aware of the Priority Services Register administered by utility companies such as energy companies.

The questionnaire featured information about the Priority Services Register which read as follows:

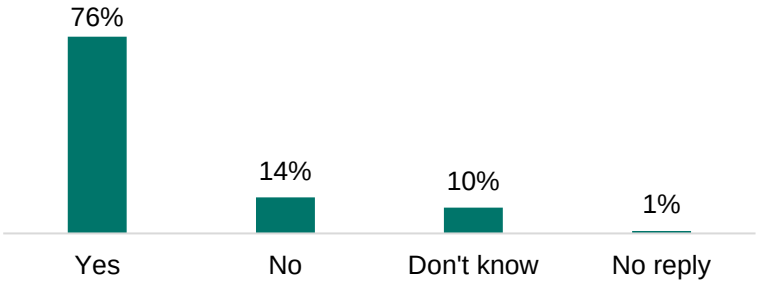
> The Priority Services Register (PSR) is a free support service administered by utility companies to help customers in vulnerable situations.
>
> Help offered through the Register can include:
>
> - Advance notice of planned power cuts if you rely on energy supply for medical reasons
> - Priority support in emergency power outages for gas, electricity and water
> - Regular meter reading services if you are unable to do so yourself
> - Free gas safety check from your energy supplier
>
> You are eligible for inclusion on the Register if you or someone in your home:
>
> - Have reached state pension age
> - Have a disability or long term medical condition

- Are recovering from an injury or hospital stay
- Have a hearing or sight condition
- Have a mental health condition

Respondents were asked, based on the criteria above, whether they or anyone in their household would be eligible for inclusion on the Priority Services Register.

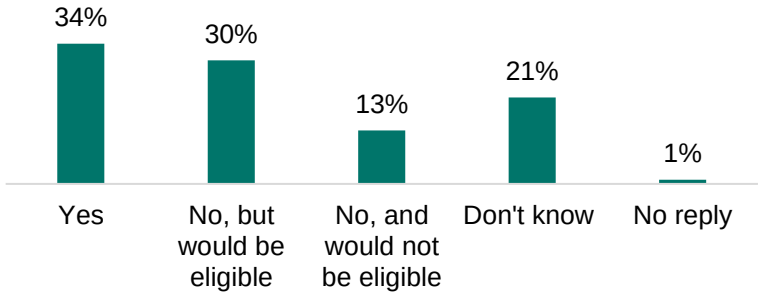
Three quarters of respondents (76%) considered themselves to be eligible for the Priority Services Register.

Chart 10.1: Eligibility for Priority Services Register
Base = all respondents (1015)



A third of respondents (34%) were on a Priority Services Register with their utility supplier and 30% were not but felt that they would be eligible.

Chart 10.2: Placement on Register
Base = all respondents (1015)



Of the 349 respondents currently on a Priority Services Register, 91% were on the Register with their electricity supplier, 54% with their gas supplier and 11% with their water supplier.

11. The OFGEM Price Cap

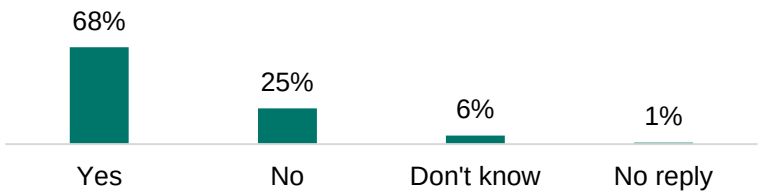
11.1 Awareness of the OFGEM Price Cap

The questionnaire featured an explanation of the OFGEM Price Cap.

> OFGEM, the energy regular, sets the OFGEM Price Cap which is the maximum amount that energy suppliers are allowed to charge domestic energy customers currently on SVTs or prepayment meters. These two caps are set separately by OFGEM.
>
> The price cap rose on 1 April 2022. For customers on SVTs, it rose to an average of £1,971 and customers of pre-payment meters to £2,017 per year.

Approximately two thirds of respondents (68%) were aware of the OFGEM Price Cap.

Chart 11.1: Awareness of OFGEM Price Cap
Base = all respondents (1015)



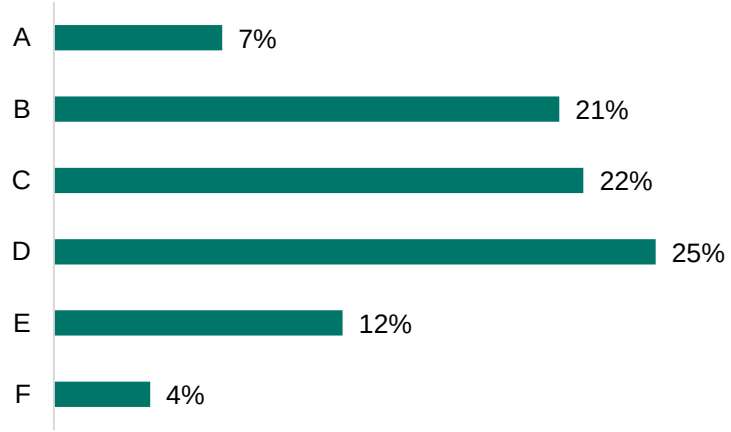
19% of respondents had attempted to change their tariff or switch energy supplier as a result of the increase in the Price Cap.

11.2 Energy Performance Certificate

32% of respondents were aware of the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) and 11% were aware what the EPC rating of their home was.

25% of respondents lived in a home with an EPC rating of D and 22% resided in a property with a rating of C.

Chart 11.1: Awareness of EPC rating for home
Base = all respondents with an EPC (114)

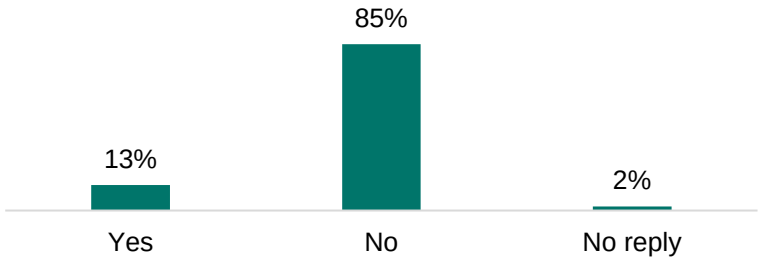


11.3 Scottish Government's proposals

The Scottish Government's proposes that all homes in Scotland are EPC C Standard or above by 2040, and there is a possibility of mandating homeowners to ensure this from 2030 onwards.

Just 13% of respondents were aware of these proposals.

Chart 11.2: Awareness of Scottish Government's proposals
Base = all respondents (1015)



12. Carbon Monoxide and Alarms

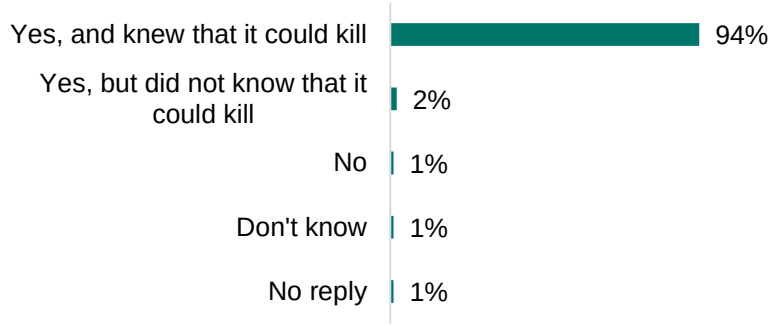
This section of the questionnaire featured the following description about carbon monoxide and alarms.

> Carbon monoxide is a poisonous gas with no smell or taste. If you are exposed to high levels of the gas it can kill.
>
> Carbon monoxide is produced when fuels such as gas, oil, coal or wood do not burn fully. These fuels can be found in many household appliances such as boilers, central heating systems, gas fires and cookers. If these appliances become faulty or not installed correctly this can lead to causes of accidental exposure to carbon monoxide.
>
> Because it is an odourless, dangerous gas it is therefore important to ensure you have a carbon monoxide alarm installed in any rooms in your home where you have any carbon fuelled appliance/s.

12.1 Awareness of carbon monoxide poisoning

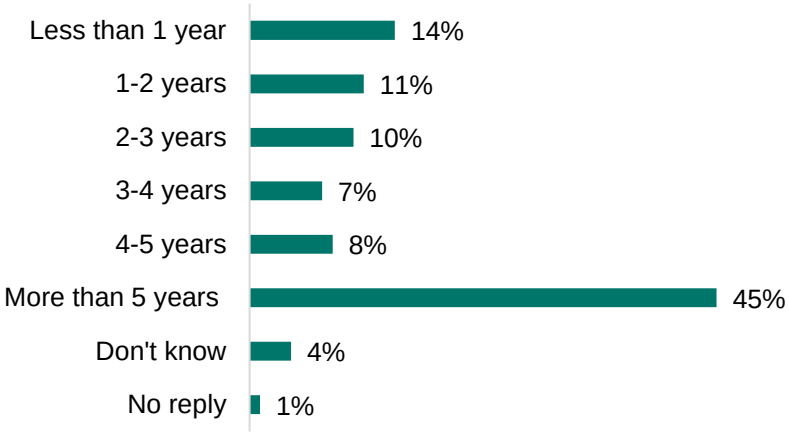
Respondents were asked if they were aware of the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning. Awareness was high with 94% of respondents aware that carbon monoxide poisoning could kill.

Chart 12.1: Awareness of carbon monoxide poisoning
Base = all respondents (1015)



79% of respondents had a working carbon monoxide alarm installed in their home. 45% of these respondents had had their alarm installed for more than five years.

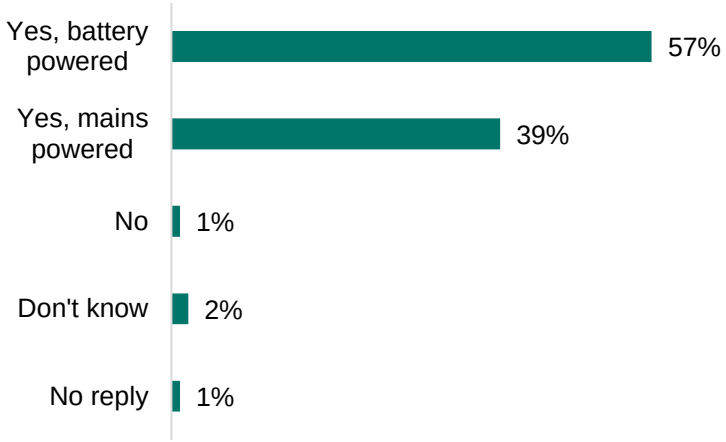
Chart 12.2: Length of time with carbon monoxide alarm
Base = all respondents with a carbon monoxide alarm (801)



12.2 Fire/smoke alarms

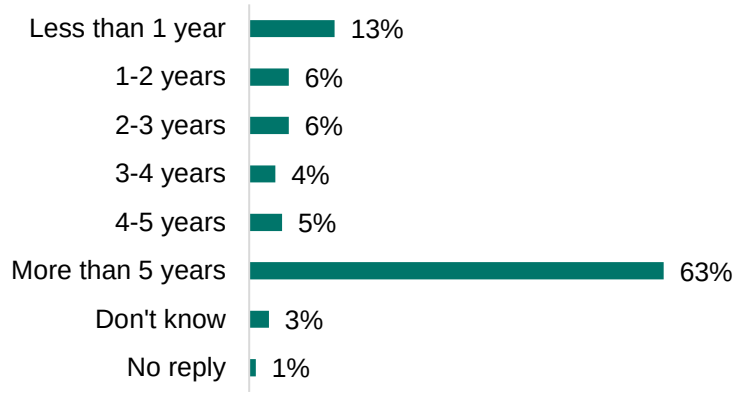
57% of respondents had a battery powered fire/smoke alarm and 39% had a mains powered alarm.

Chart 12.3: Fitted fire/smoke alarms
Base = all respondents (1015)



Approximately two thirds of respondents (63%) had had their fitted fire/smoke alarm for more than five years and 13% for less than a year.

Chart 12.4: Length of time fitted fire/smoke alarm
Base = all respondents with a fitted alarm (972)



12.3 Interlinked smoke and heat alarms

The questionnaire featured information about the new regulations surrounding interlinked smoke and heat alarms.

In Scotland, from 1 February 2022, homeowners were required to ensure their home meets the new fire alarms standard. This means that every home will need:

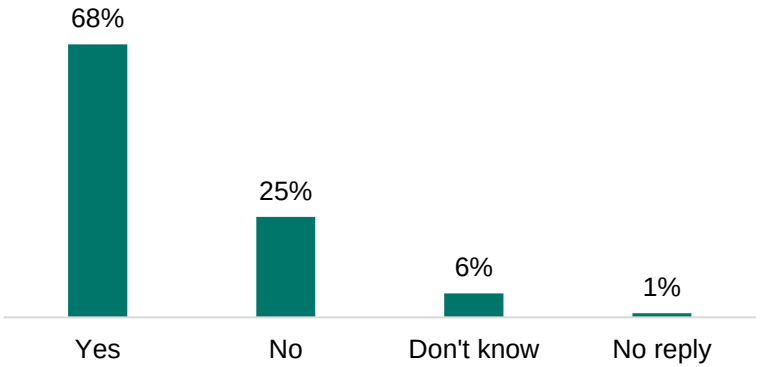
- 1 smoke alarm in the room you spend most of the day (eg living room)
- 1 smoke alarm in every circulation space on each storey such as hallways and landings
- 1 heat alarm in the kitchen
- A carbon monoxide detector if you have any carbon based appliances (boiler, flue, fire, non-electric heater)

Furthermore all smoke and heat alarms must be mounted on the ceiling and interlinked, meaning that when one alarm is triggered, every other alarm will also make a sound.

88% of respondents were aware of the new rules around having interlinked smoke and heat alarms fitted in homes before February 2022.

Over two thirds (68%) had interlinked alarms installed in their homes.

Chart 12.5: Installed interlinked alarms
Base = all respondents (1015)

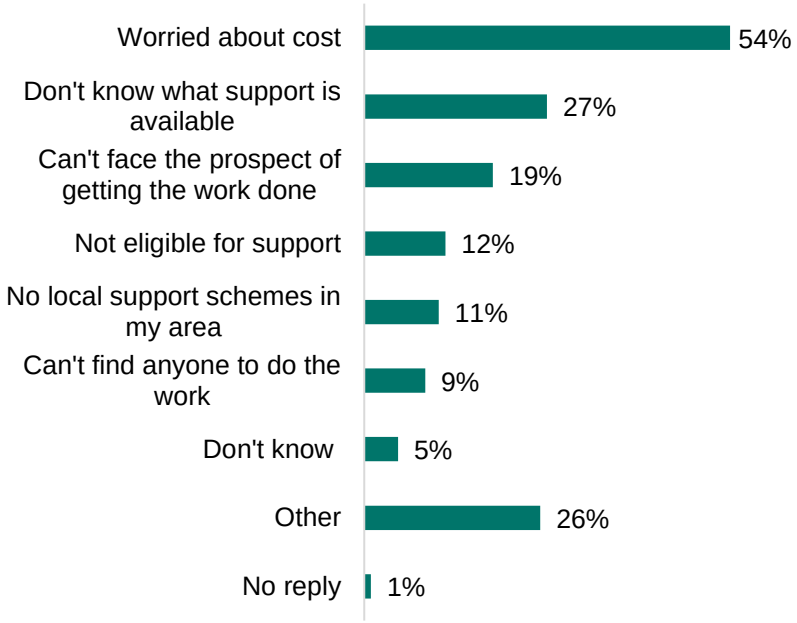


39% of the 251 respondents who did not currently have interlinked alarms installed in their homes stated that the intended to do so in the next six months.

142 respondents did not currently have interlinked alarms and did not intend to have them fitted in the next six months. These respondents were asked what was preventing them from have interlinked alarms installed.

Cost was the primary reason (54%) for not intending to install interlinked alarms with 27% unaware of what support was available to them for this purpose.

Chart 12.6: Reasons for not installing interlinked alarms
Base = all respondents without an interlinked alarm and with no plans to have them fitted (142)



'Other' reasons for not installing alarms included the cost, it being the responsibility of the landlord/housing association from whom respondents rented, some cynicism about the need to install interlinked alarms and some previous bad experience with interlinked alarms.

'I live in a council house, any alarms the council put in, they check them every 6-12 months.'

'I have 2 smoke alarms which is sufficient. Unnecessary demand by Scottish Government.'

'Don't see the need when my existing alarms are perfectly suitable and working properly.'

'I already have a smoke alarm and a carbon monoxide meter therefore I feel I do not need any further alarms.'

'The nuisance alarms from interlinked are horrendous and affect me very badly. My battery alarms are adequate protection and do not give nuisance alarms every hour on the hour forever. I tried interlinks and they just kept going off all. The. Time. I won't have that noise and inconvenience. Invent alarms that do not get triggered by steam, cooking or a little light vaping and I'll install them.'

13. Conclusions

The survey received a response which exceeded 1000 and illustrates the importance of providing older people with the opportunity to complete the survey either online or in paper format. Age Scotland should ensure that its website features an executive summary of the findings which provides older people with feedback on the data received and how Age Scotland will use this to inform its future policy. In this way it will encourage older people to continue to be invested in Age Scotland's survey projects.

The majority of respondents paid their gas and electric bills monthly or quarterly by direct debit. Of note is that the majority do not seek out better deals with other energy suppliers and this may be due to the fact that they are in a routine of payments and are a generation who are, in the main, less likely to look around for better financial options.

The majority of respondents have concerns about rising fuel prices alongside an increase in food and fuel costs. For those living in rural locations petrol is essential to ensuring they are not isolated. Clearly worries about rising prices is impacting on older people's mental health which also follows on from the impact of the pandemic. Cutting back on food, heating, essentials and treats means life for many older people is significantly less comfortable than it should be. Their fixed income and pension are not increasing in line with fuel bills.

The study has highlighted there is a lack of awareness of energy schemes and advice services and a need to raise awareness amongst older people so that they can get the help and advice they need.

Open-ended questions about communicating with energy suppliers identified issues around length of time it takes for telephone calls to be answered, being passed around different departments, the inability to speak with one person on multiple occasions, the use of automated response systems, not speaking with someone for whom English is their first language and calls not returned. Respondents felt there was a need for staff training in customer service and perhaps this is something energy suppliers should consider in relation to engaging with older people.

49% of respondents were aware of the Priority Services Register administered by utility companies such as energy companies but not all those who considered themselves eligible were actually on a Register. This is something which should be more widely communicated to older people via organisations such as Age Scotland but also by the utility companies themselves.

Approximately two thirds of respondents (68%) were aware of the OFGEM Price Cap and 19% had attempted to change their tariff or switch energy supplier as a result of the increase in the Price Cap. Creating greater awareness of this and how to use this to best advantage should be communicated to older people.

Whilst a large proportion of respondents had all the necessary alarms in their homes, a quarter of respondents had not yet

installed the newly required interlinked fire and smoke alarms, and many more wouldn't be able to do this before the end of 2022. This highlights the scale of work still required to reach older households and ensure their homes are as safe as possible.