



Department
of Energy &
Climate Change

DECC Public Attitudes Tracker – Wave 8

Summary of key findings

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DECC Public Attitudes Tracker

DECC set up a tracking survey in early 2012 to understand and monitor public attitudes to the Department's main business priorities. The survey runs four times a year and consists of one longer, annual survey and three shorter, quarterly surveys which focus on a subset of questions where we think attitudes might shift quickly or be affected by seasonal changes. This summary note presents headline findings from the eighth quarterly wave of the survey.

The eighth wave of data was collected between 11 and 15 December 2013 using face-to-face in-home interviews with a representative sample of 2,110 households in the UK. The wave 8 questionnaire, although essentially the same as the previous quarterly questionnaire (wave 7, September 2013), included an additional question on shale gas, additional questions on small scale renewable heat, and repeated a question on trust in energy suppliers (replacing a question on awareness of collective switching, which is now asked on an annual rather than quarterly basis).

The headline findings of the December 2013 survey results are generally compared below with the last quarterly wave (September 2013 - wave 7) and the survey taken at the same time last year (December 2012 - wave 4). Please refer to the Excel tables for a full comparison of wave 8 findings with the seven previous waves: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/public-attitudes-tracking-survey>

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FROM WAVE 8

This note provides selected headlines and is not an exhaustive overview of the findings. Please refer to the accompanying excel summary tables and excel dataset to see full responses to all survey questions.

Summary findings from the December 2013 survey are broadly consistent with waves 1-7 and largely unchanged since September 2013 and December 2012.

RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES: continued high levels of support; some variance by income and housing tenure

- Over three-quarters of UK adults (77%) said they supported the use of renewable energy sources to generate the UK's electricity, fuel and heat, a similar proportion to September 2013 (76%) and December 2012 (79%).

- Support levels for individual renewable energy sources (off-shore wind, biomass, onshore wind, wave and tidal and solar) were unchanged since September 2013 and December 2012.
- Those in social housing were slightly less likely than private renters to support the use of renewable energy sources to generate the UK's electricity, fuel and heat.

SHALE GAS: sharp rise in awareness; a quarter support extraction, with half undecided

- More than half of people (52%) had heard of shale gas and knew what it was, a significant increase since July 2012 (32%), when the question was first asked.
- 27% of people said they support shale gas extraction, with half (48%) saying they neither support nor oppose it. One in five (21%) were opposed.
- In December 2013 men (77%) were slightly more likely than women (64%) to know about shale gas. People who know a lot about shale gas are significantly more likely to support it; owner-occupiers were significantly more likely than social renters to know about shale gas and were more likely to support the extraction of shale gas.

NUCLEAR ENERGY: views continue to be broadly split

- 37% of people supported the use of nuclear energy to generate electricity in the UK, unchanged since September 2013 (36%) and December 2012 (37%), and the same proportion neither supported nor opposed its use. Almost a quarter (23%) opposed the use of nuclear energy, similar to September 2013 (26%) and December 2012 (25%).
- In December 2013 owner occupiers were significantly more likely than social renters to support the use of nuclear energy to generate electricity in the UK.

ENERGY BILLS, SWITCHING AND SUPPLIERS: levels of concern about paying for energy bills unchanged; likelihood of changing energy supplier remains the same; overall trust in suppliers similar to previous quarters

- 47% of people were very or fairly worried about paying their energy bills, similar to September 2013 (48%). In December 2012 50% of people were very or fairly worried about paying their energy bills, compared with 45% in September 2012.
- 32% of people said they will or may switch energy supplier in the next 12 months, unchanged since September 2013 (34%) and December 2012 (35%).
- Four in ten (42%) of people trusted their energy supplier to inform them of the best tariff for them, similar to March 2013 (46%) and March 2012 (44%), when the question was first asked.
- Half of people (49%) said they trusted their supplier to provide impartial and accurate advice on energy efficiency measures, similar to March 2013 (51%) and March 2012 (53%), when the question was first asked.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY: number of people who think about saving energy unchanged; fewer people leave heating on when they go out

- Three quarters of people (75%) gave a lot or a fair amount of thought to saving energy in their home, unchanged since September 2013 (77%) and December 2012 (78%).
- There was a year on year fall in the number of people who leave their heating on at least occasionally when they go out: 45% did this in December 2013 compared to 54% in December 2012, but similar to 43% in September 2013. It is worth noting that the weather was unseasonably mild in December 2013.
- There was no change in the proportion of people who try at least occasionally to keep rooms they are not using at a cooler temperature: three quarters of people did this in December 2013 (76%), September 2013 (78%) and December 2012 (76%).

ENERGY SECURITY: levels of concern about future price rises remains high; less concern about likelihood of power cuts

- More than eight in ten people (84%) said they were concerned about steep rises in energy prices in the future, unchanged since September 2013 (84%) and December 2012 (88%).
- 54% of people were concerned about power cuts becoming more frequent in future, down slightly since March 2013 (60%), when the question was last asked, but similar to July 2012 (57%) when it was first asked.

RENEWABLE HEAT: many people aware of renewable heat; over a quarter are positive about it

- More than three quarters of people (78%) knew something about renewable heat. People on higher incomes were more likely to know about it.
- 44% of people are positive about having a renewable heating system in their home, with 43% neither positive nor negative.
- Friends and family (33%) were the most trusted source for advice on which heating system to install The Energy Saving Advice Service (ESAS) was the second most trusted source of advice (25%)

Technical notes

The results shown here are based on 2,110 face-to-face in-home interviews conducted with a representative sample of UK adults aged 16+. Fieldwork was conducted between 11 and 15 December 2013 on the TNS UK Omnibus, which uses a random location quota sampling method.

The questionnaire was designed by DECC and TNS BMRB drawing on a number of questions from previous surveys. Questions were refined through cognitive testing.

The representativeness of the data was controlled through sample design, fieldwork quotas and post-fieldwork weighting. Data were weighted for the following characteristics: sex, age, social grade, region and tenure. Results included here are based on weighted data.

Due to a coding error during the wave 8 fieldwork, respondents who gave the response 'don't want to/won't do this' at Q7 in relation to biomass, air source heat pumps and ground source heat pumps were not asked the follow-up questions with regard to each technology at Q7_4, Q7_5 and Q7_6. The achieved sample sizes for these questions do not therefore represent the entire population of interest.

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Department of Energy & Climate Change

3 Whitehall Place

London SW1A 2AW

www.gov.uk/decc

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