Department
of Energy &
Climate Change

DECC PUBLIC ATTITUDES TRACKER – WAVE 4

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

4 February 2013

DECC PUBLIC ATTITUDES TRACKER

DECC has set up a tracking survey to understand and monitor public attitudes to the Department's main business priorities. This note presents headline findings from the fourth wave of the 2012/13 survey. The survey runs four times a year, with one longer survey annually and three shorter quarterly surveys focused on a subset of questions where we think attitudes might shift quickly or be affected by seasonal changes.

The fourth wave of data was collected between 12 December 2012 and 2 January 2013 using face-to-face in-home interviews with a representative sample of 2,107 households in the UK. As outlined above, only a subset of the questions asked in wave 1 were asked in waves 2, 3 and 4. In addition, some of the questions asked in wave 2 in order to establish a new baseline have not been asked in waves 3 and 4 and will only be asked annually in future years. There are no new questions in wave 4. Please refer to the excel tables to see the responses to all of the wave 4 questions and differences between waves 1, 2, 3 and 4. View all information and data relating to the survey.

This summary highlights statistically significant differences between waves 4, 3, and 2 and, where appropriate, wave 1, but the value of a tracking survey is in looking at how attitudes change over time so the full value of the findings will only be apparent when we have a number of waves of data.

SUMMARY RESULTS FROM WAVE 4

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

ENERGY SECURITY: A substantial proportion of the public is concerned about energy security when asked directly

- When asked directly, 48% of people were very concerned about steep rises in energy prices in the future, up from 40% in waves 2 and 3 but similar to the wave 1 finding of 51%. This may be a seasonal effect and may also be a result of widespread news coverage of rises in energy prices between waves 3 and 4.

- When asked directly, 22% of people were very concerned that UK supplies of fossil fuels might not being sufficient to meet UK demand, in line with previous waves.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND HEAT: Although people say they think about saving energy in the home, many also said they were not regularly taking simple steps to save energy

- Only three in ten people (29%) said they gave a lot of thought to saving energy in the home with 49% giving it a fair amount of thought. Although higher than waves 3 (26%) and 2 (22%), this finding is similar to wave 1 (27%).

- More than half of people (54%) said they left the heating on at least occasionally when going out for a few hours, up from 45% in wave 3. However this is likely to be a seasonal finding.

- Around three-quarters of people (76%) said they try, at least occasionally, to keep rooms they are not using at a cooler temperature than those they are using. This is similar to the last 3 waves.

- Awareness of installing low carbon heat measures remains steady with just over half of people (52%) saying they had not heard of an air source heat pump and 44% saying they had not heard of a ground source heat pump.

- The proportion of people thinking about installing solar thermal panels was 6%, with 19% saying they would like to install this measure (but not at this stage). 24% haven't thought about this. These results are in line with wave 3.

ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE: Views on renewables are largely positive, with positive opinion on nuclear slightly outweighing opposition

- More than three quarters of people (79%) support the UK's use of renewable energy to generate electricity, fuel and heat, consistent with waves 1, 2 and 3, with 30% strongly supporting it. Just 4% of people are opposed.

- While overall support for the UK relying on a range of renewable energy sources remained high, solar energy was found to have the highest levels of support (82%), comparable with wave 3, followed by off shore wind (72%) and wave and tidal (71%). Wave and tidal support fell slightly from 74% in wave 3. On-shore wind was opposed by 13% of respondents.

- More than a third of people (37%) support the use of nuclear energy to generate electricity in the UK whilst a quarter (25%) are opposed. Over a third (36%) neither support nor oppose using nuclear energy to generate electricity. The findings are comparable to wave 3, when this rephrased question was used for the first time. .

ENERGY RETAIL MARKET: High level of concern about bills, but relatively small proportions of people planning to switch

- There was a small increase to 18% in the number of people very worried about their energy bills over the last three months, with 32% fairly worried. The number very worried is higher than for wave 3 (14%) but similar to the higher wave 1 findings (19%) in March 2012. This may be a seasonal effect and may also be linked to widespread news coverage of rises in energy prices between waves 3 and 4.

- 12% of those who were worried about their energy bills said they were more worried about their energy bills than both their transport costs and food and other household costs, which is slightly higher than the first 3 waves.

- Just 7% of respondents said they planned to switch supplier in the next year, with a further 29% saying they may or may not switch, in line with wave 3.

- A quarter of the public (26%) are now aware of collective switching, up slightly from 22% in wave 3.

TECHNICAL NOTES

Results shown here are based on 2,107 UK face-to-face in-home interviews conducted with a representative sample of adults aged 16+. Fieldwork was conducted between 12 December 2012 and 2 January 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 though cognitive testing.

The representativeness of the data were 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.

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