

DESNZ Public Attitudes Tracker: Energy Bills and Tariffs Spring 2024, UK

03 July 2024

Official Statistics

The DESNZ Public Attitudes Tracker is a nationally representative annual survey of adults (aged 16+) in the UK that tracks public awareness, attitudes and behaviours relating to the policies of the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), such as energy and climate change.

This report provides a summary of the headline findings relating to energy bills and tariffs from the Spring 2024 wave of the Tracker, which ran from 18 March to 22 April 2024.

The findings within this report should be viewed in the light of volatile energy prices over the period between the Spring 2022 and Spring 2024 survey waves. When these questions were first asked in Spring 2022, this was in the context of a widely anticipated further increase of the energy price cap, which increased by 54% in April 2022. Energy prices were at their peak in Spring 2023, but by Summer 2023 decreases in the energy price cap in July 2023 reduced household bills for most people. Although lower wholesale prices have led to falls in prices over this period, energy bills in March 2024 were still around 59% above their winter 2021/22 levels.

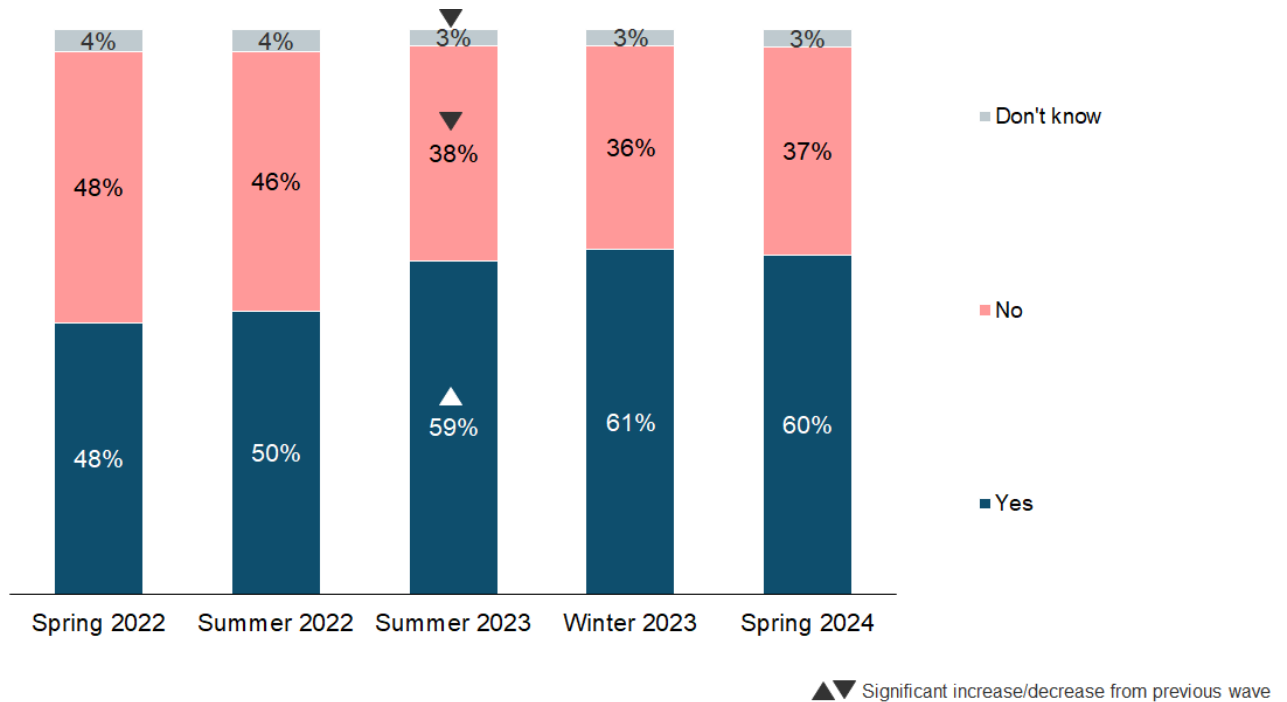
New questions were included in Spring 2024 that asked respondents to provide a self-reported assessment of income and financial hardship to help describe patterns in the data.

Differences between groups are only reported where they are statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval level.

Smart meters

The findings related to smart meters have been weighted to represent all households (rather than all individuals). In Spring 2024, 60% of households said that they had a smart meter, unchanged since Summer 2023 (59%) and remaining above the level observed in Summer 2022 (50%) (Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1: Whether household has a smart meter in the home (based on all households), Spring 2022, Summer 2022, Summer 2023, Winter 2023, Spring 2024



SMARTMET. The next question is about smart meters. Smart meters automatically send meter readings to your energy supplier and usually come with a home energy monitor that provides information about your energy usage. Smart meters also allow prepayment customers to top up their credit online and over the phone. Does your household have a smart meter?

Base: All wave respondents – Spring 2022 (4,362), Summer 2022 (4,486), Summer 2023 (3,997), Winter 2023 (3,735), Spring 2024 (4,085)

Note: At this question, results are weighted to households (not individuals)

People living in owner-occupied properties (63%) were more likely to have a smart meter than those in rented households (60% of social rented and 52% of private rented households). People living in houses and bungalows were also more likely to report having a smart meter (63%) compared with those living in a flat (51%).

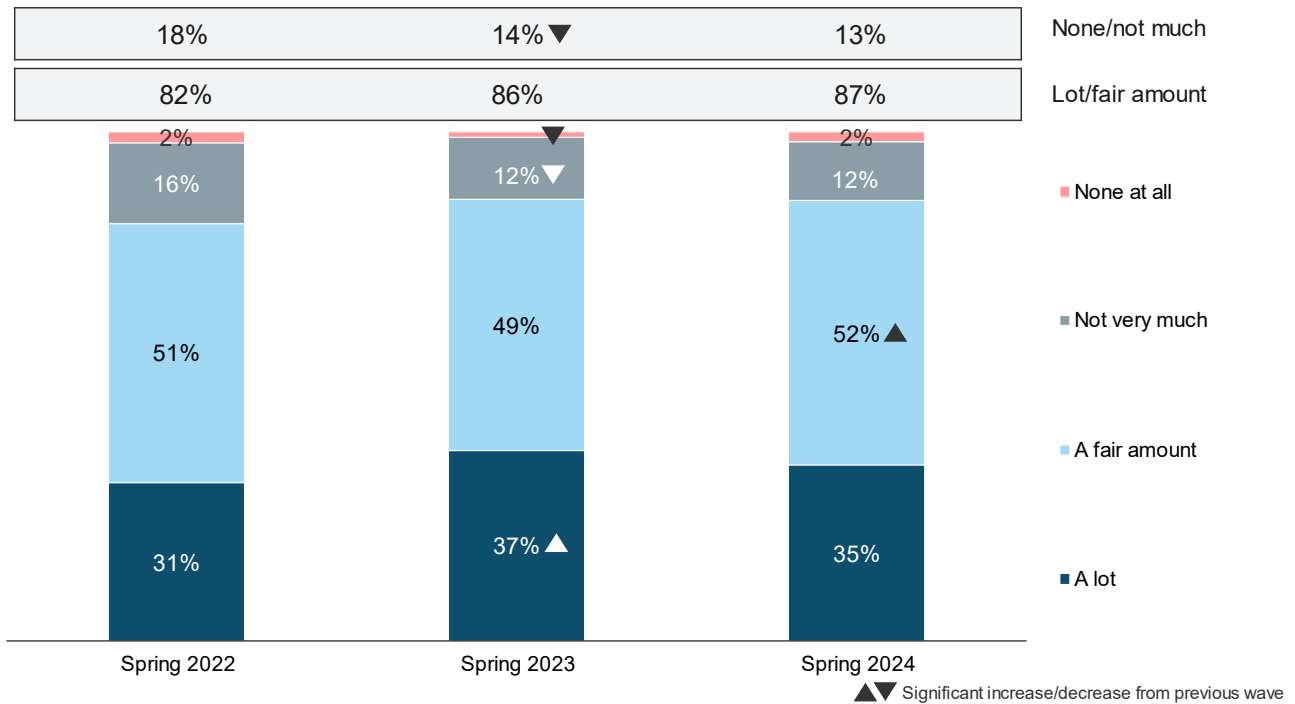
Smart meter ownership was also lower in Northern Ireland (14%) and London (50%) compared with all other English regions (from 61% to 68%), Scotland (59%) and Wales (56%).

Energy saving and wasting behaviours

As explained at [the start of this report](#) trends in relation to questions on this topic should be viewed in the context of changes in energy prices over this period.

In Spring 2024, 87% of people said they gave ‘a lot’ or ‘a fair amount’ of thought to saving energy in the home (Figure 5.2). There was an increase in those saying they had given ‘a fair amount’ (52%) of thought to saving energy in the home from Spring 2023 (49%).

Figure 5.2: Amount of thought given to saving energy in the home (based on all people), Spring 2022, Spring 2023, Spring 2024



ENERGSAVE. How much thought, if any, would you say you give to saving energy in your home?
 Base: All wave respondents – Spring 2022 (4,367), Spring 2023 (4,399), Spring 2024 (4,082)

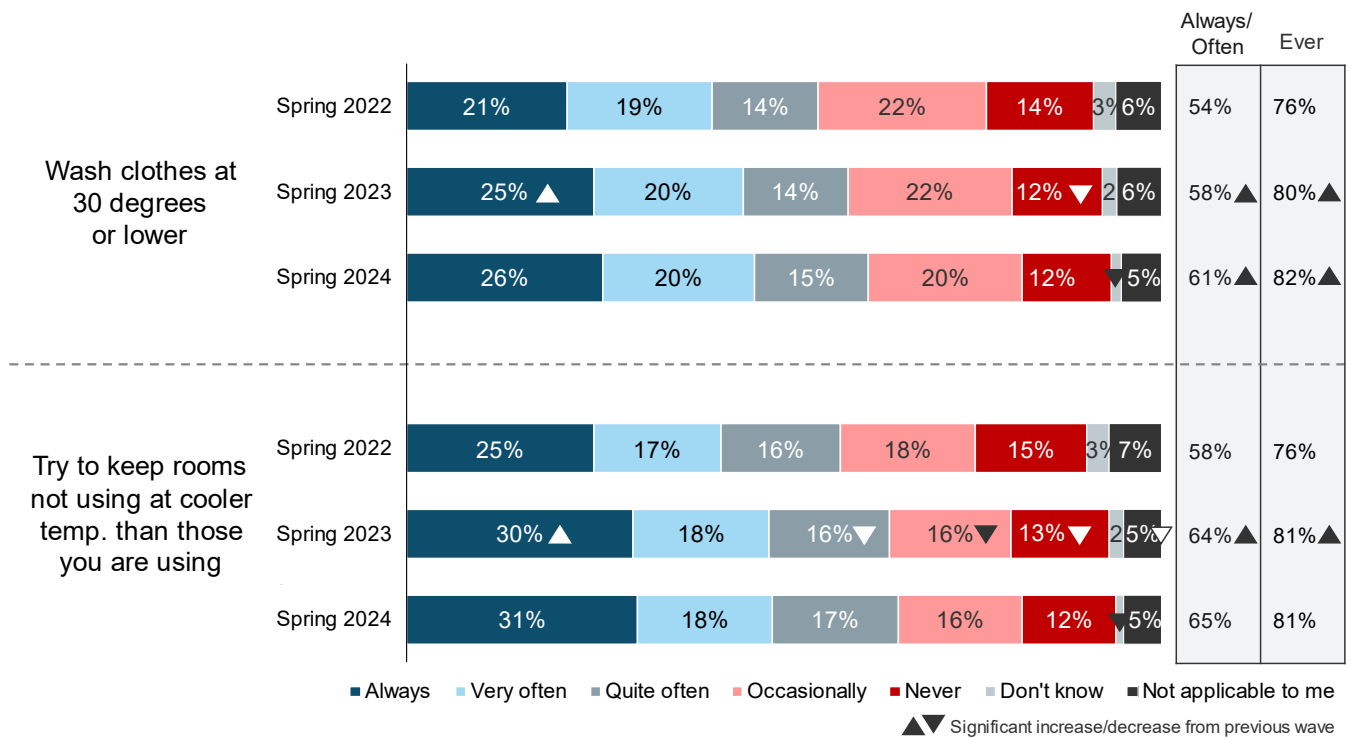
Giving ‘a lot’ of thought to saving energy at home was highest for people aged 55 and over (41% of those aged 55-64 and 42% of those aged 65+), and lowest for those aged under 34 (19% of those aged 16 to 24 and 28% of those aged 25 to 34).

People living in owner-occupied households (89%) were slightly more likely to have given energy saving at least ‘a fair amount’ of thought compared with those in rented households (83%).

People finding it difficult to get by financially were more likely to have given this ‘a lot’ of thought (43%), compared with those ‘just about getting by’ (32%) or those who were ‘doing alright’ or ‘living comfortably’ (34%).

In Spring 2024, the frequency of reporting energy-saving behaviours was broadly similar to Spring 2023 but remains at a much higher level than in Spring 2022. Overall, 82% (up from 80% in Spring 2023 and 76% in Spring 2022) reported that they at least occasionally wash clothes at 30 degrees or lower, with 61% (up from 58% in Spring 2023 and 76% in Spring 2022) saying they do this always or often (Figure 5.3). Overall, 81% (up from 76% in Spring 2022) reported that they at least occasionally keep unused rooms at a cooler temperature, with 65% (up from 58% in Spring 2022) saying they do this always or often.

Figure 5.3: Frequency of energy saving behaviours (based on all people), Spring 2022, Spring 2023, Spring 2024

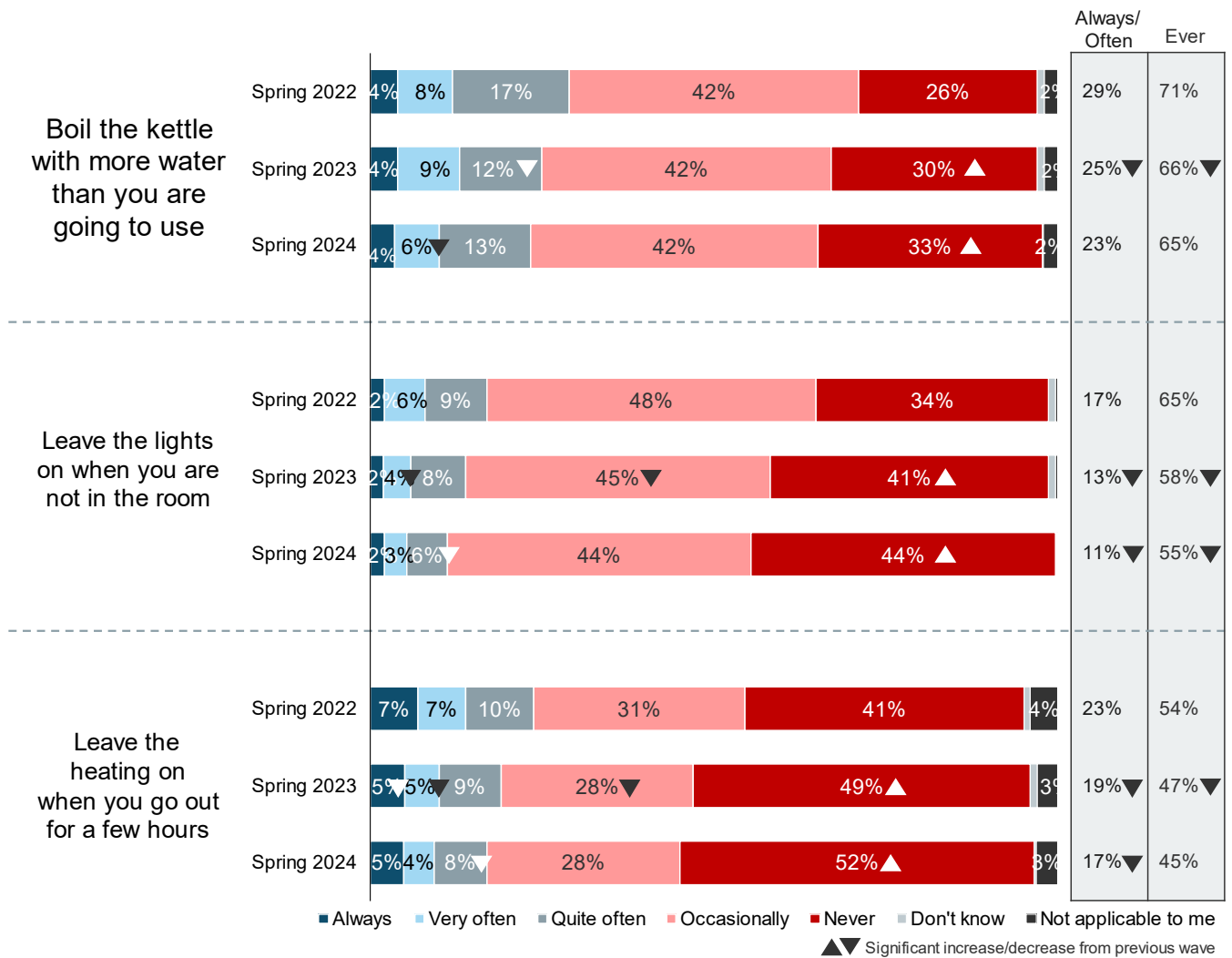


ENSAVFREQ. How often, if at all, do you personally do any of the following?

Base: All wave respondents – Spring 2022 / Spring 2023 / Spring 2024: Wash clothes at 30 degrees or lower (4,349/4,383/4,081); Try to keep rooms that you are not using at a cooler temperature than those you are using (4,360/4,392/4,079)

While results for energy wasting behaviours remained broadly similar to Spring 2023, people were much less likely to report energy wasting behaviours (Figure 5.4). In Spring 2024, 65% said they at least occasionally boil the kettle with more water than needed (down from 71% in Spring 2022), 55% said the same about leaving lights on when not in the room (down from 58% in Spring 2023 and 65% in Spring 2022), while 45% said this about leaving the heating on when going out for a few hours (down from 54% in Spring 2022). The pattern of findings over time for the proportion of people doing these behaviours always or often was similar.

Figure 5.4: Frequency of energy wasting behaviours (based on all people), Spring 2022, Spring 2023, Spring 2024



ENSAVFREQ. How often, if at all, do you personally do any of the following?
 Base: All wave respondents – Spring 2022 / Spring 2023 /Spring 2024: Boil the kettle with more water than you are going to use (4,359/4,392/4,085); Leave the lights on when you are not in the room (4,362/4,390/4,083); Leave the heating on when you go out for a few hours (4,357/4,392/4,080)

Cost of energy bills

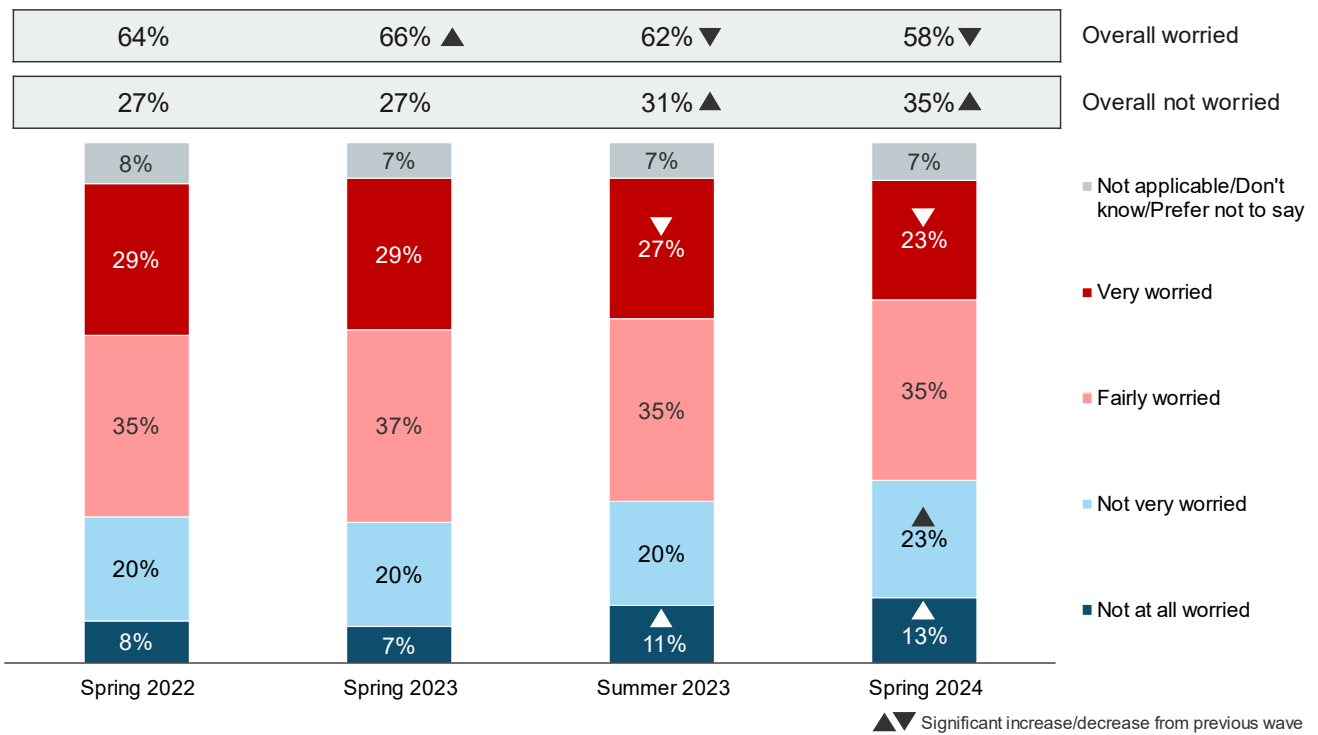
Concern about paying energy bills

As with energy saving behaviours, attitudes towards the cost of paying energy bills over time should also be viewed in the context of changing energy prices over the period of tracking, as discussed [in the introduction to this report](#).

In Spring 2024, 58% were worried about paying energy bills, which represents a small decline since Summer 2023 (62%) and a larger decline since Spring 2023 (66%). The decline in level of worry between Spring 2024 and Summer 2023 was driven by a reduction in the proportion who were 'very worried' (23%, down from 27% in Summer 2023).

The proportion of people that said they were 'not at all worried' increased to 13%, up from 7% in Spring 2023 and 8% in Spring 2022 when this question was first asked.

Figure 5.5: Level of worry about paying for energy bills (based on all people), Spring 2022, Spring 2023, Summer 2023, Spring 2024



PAYBILLEN. Over the last three months, how worried, if at all, have you been about paying for energy bills (gas/electricity)?

Base: All wave respondents – Spring 2022 (4,369), Spring 2023 (4,408), Summer 2023 (4,003), Spring 2024 (4,081)

Those aged 25 to 54 were most likely to be worried overall (between 62% to 66% by age band), in comparison to those aged under 25 (49%) and 65 and over (47%).

People living in rented households (70%) were more likely to be worried than those living in owner-occupied households (52%). People who reported they were finding it difficult to

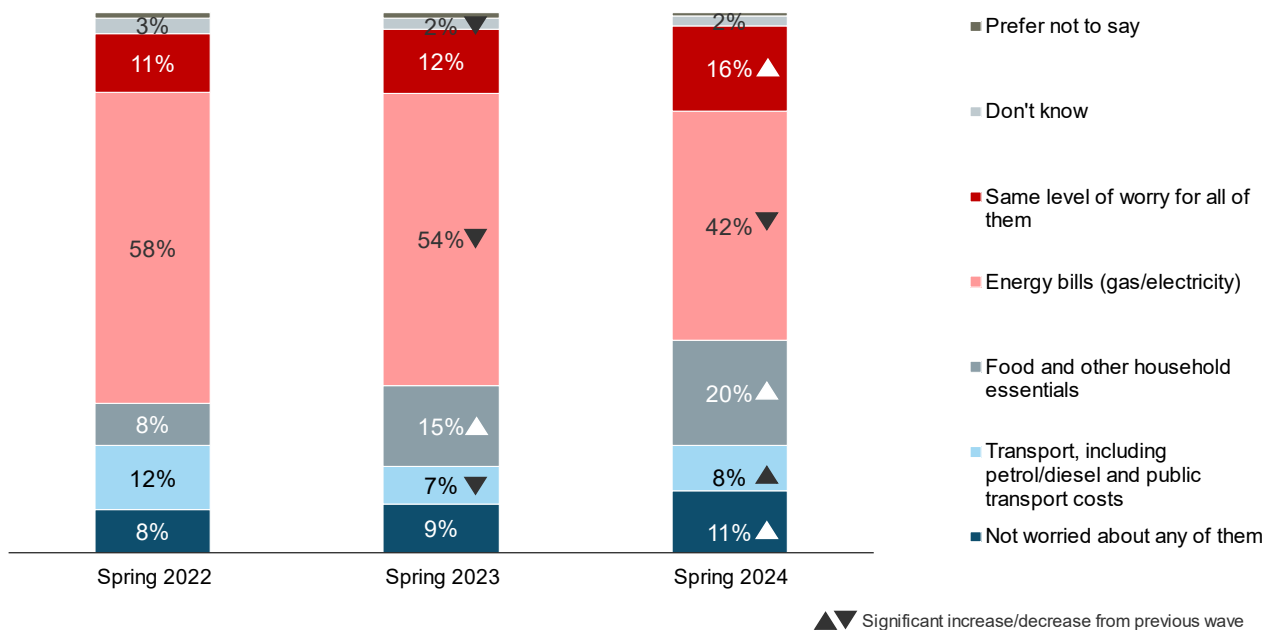
manage financially were also more likely than those ‘just about getting by’ or ‘living comfortably’/‘doing alright’ to be worried (88% compared with 75% and 40% respectively)¹.

Energy bills in the context of other bills

In Spring 2024, when asked to choose which type of expense out of a range of household outgoings respondents were most worried about, energy bills were ranked highest as in all previous survey waves (Figure 5.6).

Overall, 42% were most worried about energy bills (down from 54% in Spring 2023). Food and other household essentials were the most worrying expense for 20% (up from 15% in Spring 2023), with a smaller proportion most worried about transport and fuel costs (8%). Overall, 16% said they equally worried about all three types of bills (up from 12% in Spring 2023), whilst 11% were not worried about any of them (up from 9% last spring).

Figure 5.6: Worry about energy bills compared with other household bills (based on all people), Spring 2022, Spring 2023, Spring 2024



MOSTWORRY. Which ONE of the following bills or expenses are you most worried about?

Base: All wave respondents – Spring 2022 (4,315), Spring 2023 (4,355), Spring 2024 (4,064)

By age, energy bills were less likely to be the most worrying household expense for those aged under 25 (35%) compared with those aged 35 and over (44%). Transport was more likely to be the main concern for those under 25 (12%) compared to every other age group (6% to 9%). Food and other essentials were more of a main concern for those aged 25 to 54 (from 23% to 25% by age band) than for those aged 55 and over (from 13% to 15%). Those aged 65 and over were more likely to say they were not worried about any bills (19%) compared with those under 55 (from 6% to 9%).

¹ New questions were included in Spring 2024 that asked respondents to provide a self-reported assessment of income and financial hardship to help describe patterns in the data.

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Energy bills were more likely to be a main source of worry for those who were either the sole (47%) or joint (42%) household decision maker compared with those who did not play a role in household decisions (35%).

In terms of financial hardship, those 'just about getting by' or finding it hard to manage were more likely to say their energy bills were the biggest worry (49%) compared with those 'doing alright' or 'living comfortably' (37%).

People who were worried more about energy bills compared with other household bills were asked to select their reasons for this from a list.

Concern about price increases remained the top reason for being more worried about energy bills than other expenses (57%, down from 67% in Spring 2023). Other reasons selected included greater increases in energy prices than other outgoings (54%, down from 61%), energy bills being more expensive than other outgoings (49%, down from 56%), having less control over energy bills (41%, down from 50%), not being able to go without energy unlike other outgoings (39%, down from 47%), and not knowing what the energy bill will cost in future (21%, no change).

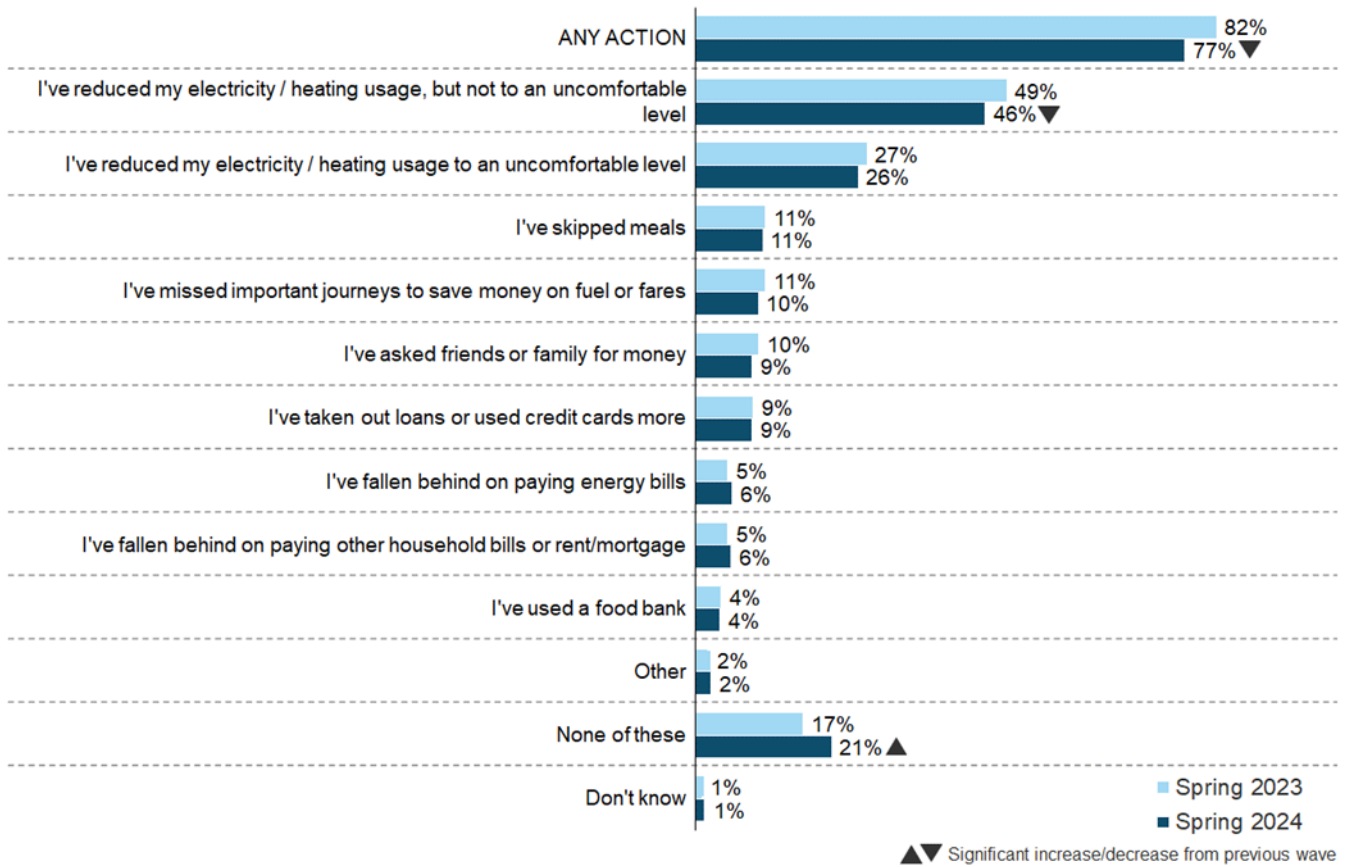
In rural areas, people were more likely to say they were most worried about energy bills because they have less control over energy bills (50% compared with 39% in urban areas). People in households with two or more children were more likely to say they were most worried about energy bills because energy prices have gone up more than other outgoings (67% compared with 45% of those with one child and 53% of those with no children) and because energy bills will be more expensive than other outgoings (63% compared with 43% and 48% respectively).

Impact of increased cost of energy bills

Respondents were asked to choose from a list of which actions, if any, they had taken in recent months because of increased energy bills (Figure 5.7). Overall, in Spring 2024, 77% of people said they had taken at least one of these cost-saving actions, but this was lower than in Spring 2023 (82%). However, overall, findings remained similar to Spring 2023 aside from a small decrease in the proportion who said that they had reduced electricity use but not to an uncomfortable level (46%, down from 49%).

Around one in ten reported skipping meals (11%), missing important journeys to save money (10%), asking friends or family for money (9%) and taking out loans or using credit cards more (9%).

Figure 5.7: Actions taken in recent months because of increase to energy bills (based on all people), Spring 2023, Spring 2024



COSTACTIONS. Which, if any, of the following actions have you taken in recent months because of the increase in the cost of your energy bills? Please select all that apply.

Base: All wave respondents – Spring 2023 (4,395), Spring 2024 (4,083)

Taking any action as a result of energy bill rises was higher among those aged 25 to 54 (from 78% to 82% by age band) compared with those aged under 25 (71%) and 65 or over (74%). There was considerable variation by age in the specific actions reported. People aged 65 and over were more likely to say they had reduced energy use but not to an uncomfortable level (55% compared with between 41% to 42% of those aged 25 to 44 and 32% of those under 25). However, they were less likely to have reduced energy use to an uncomfortable level (18% of those aged 65 or over compared with between 24% and 30% of those in younger age groups).

People aged under 35 were more likely to report a range of cost saving actions in comparison to those aged 35 or over. For example, this included skipping meals (18% of 16 to 24s and 15% of 25 to 34s compared with 5 to 11% of those aged 35 or over), missing important journeys (14 to 17% of those aged under 35 compared with 3 to 6% of those aged 55+) and falling behind on bills (10 to 11% of those aged under 35 compared with 1 to 6% of those aged 45+).

Renters (87% of social renters, 85% of private renters) were more likely to report undertaking at least one cost saving action than those living in owner-occupied households (74%). Examples of differences by tenure for individual actions included: skipping meals (20% of renters compared to 6% of owner-occupiers), reducing energy use to an uncomfortable level (36% compared to 21%), asking friends and family for money (17% compared to 5%) and using a food bank (10% compared to 1%). Renters (12%) were also more likely to report falling behind on their energy bills (compared to 3% of owner-occupiers) and non-energy bills (13%

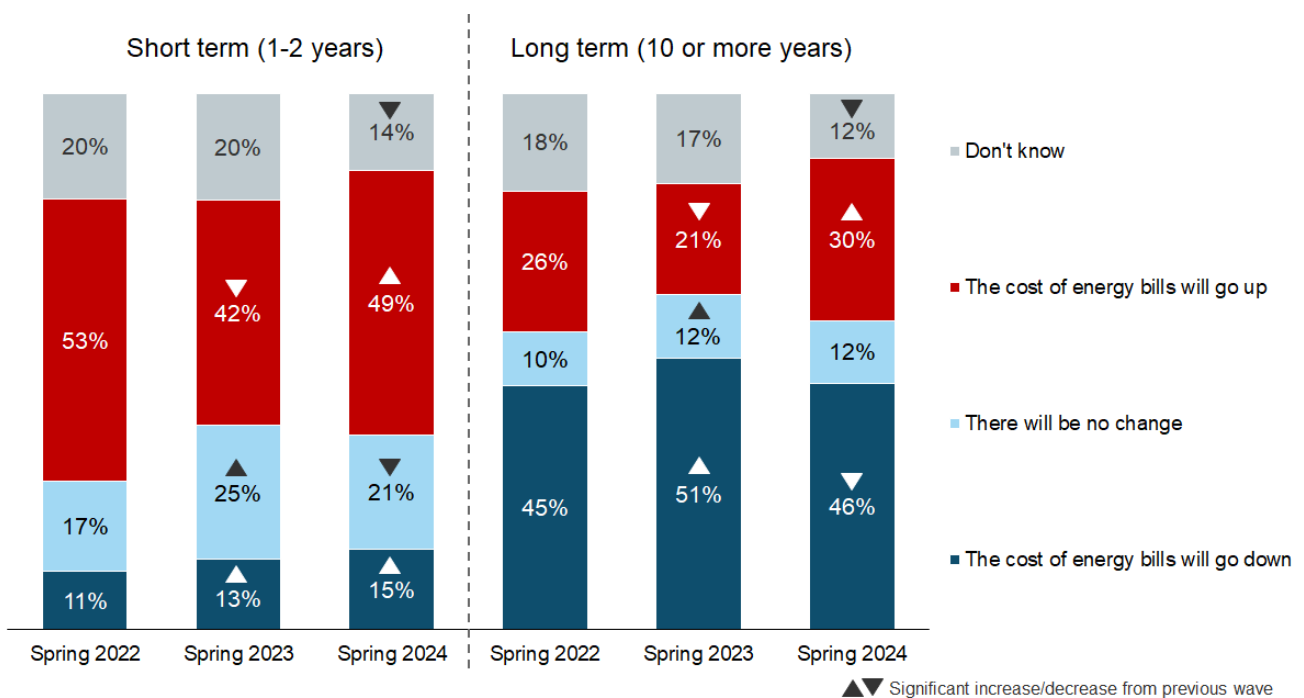
compared to 2%). By financial hardship, almost all people ‘finding it difficult’ to manage (96%) reported taking at least one cost-saving action compared with 86% of those ‘just about getting by’ and 67% of those who were ‘living comfortably or doing alright’.

Attitudes towards cost of renewable energy

In Spring 2024, a higher proportion of people expected that moving towards renewable energy sources will lead to an increase (49%) rather than a decrease (15%) in the cost of energy bills over the **short term** (1-2 years) (Figure 5.8). Expectations of a short-term price increase was higher than in Spring 2023 (42%) but this expectation has fallen since Spring 2022 (53%). However, expectations of a short-term price decrease were also higher than in Spring 2023 (13%) and Spring 2022 (11%).

By contrast, people were more optimistic about price changes in the **long term** (10+ years). A higher proportion of people expected that moving towards renewable energy sources will lead to a longer-term decrease (46%) rather than an increase (30%) in the cost of energy bills. However, an expectation of longer-term price increases has risen over time since Spring 2022 (26%) and especially since Spring 2023 (21%).

Figure 5.8: Perceived impact of move to renewable energy sources on energy bills (based on all people), Spring 2022, Spring 2023, Spring 2024



IMPACTBILL. What impact do you think that the UK’s move to renewable energy sources might have on people’s energy bills in the UK...?

Base: All wave respondents – Spring 2022 / Spring 2023 / Spring 2024: ...In the short term (1-2 years) (4,336/4,377/4,079); ...In the long term (10 or more years) (4,301/4,372/4,061)

In general, younger people were more likely to expect energy price decreases both in the short-term and long-term, with older people aged 65 or over less likely to expect price reductions. Those aged 16 to 54 were more likely to expect a short-term price decrease (between 16% and 21%) compared with 8% to 12% of those aged 55+. People aged 16 to 54 were also more likely to expect longer-term price decreases (between 50% and 61%) compared with 33% of those aged 65 and over.

People with no qualifications were less likely to expect bills to go down both in the short term (9%, compared with 17% of those with a degree and 15% of those with other qualifications) and in the longer term (28% compared with 54% of those with a degree and 46% of those with other qualifications).

Energy suppliers

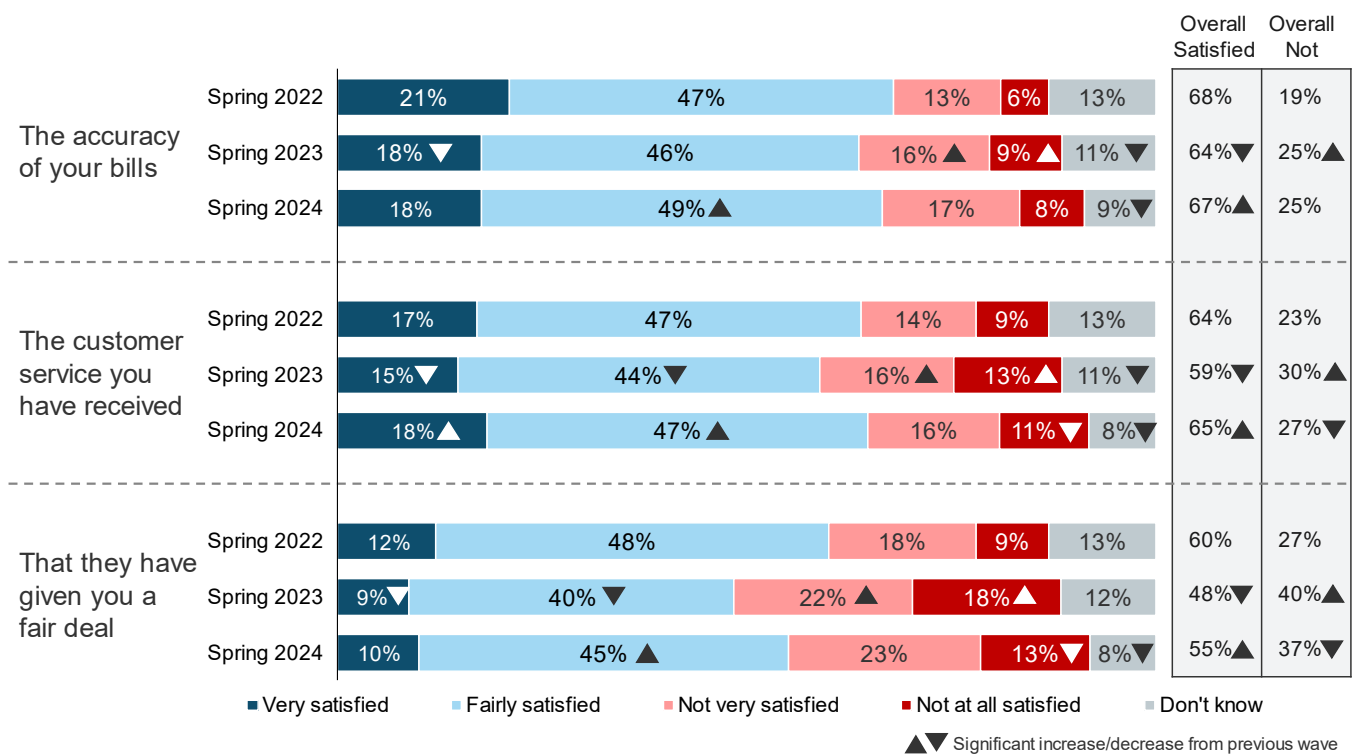
All respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with energy suppliers on three different aspects of service: accuracy, customer service and fairness. Those that selected 'not applicable' are excluded from the results (Figure 5.9).

In Spring 2024, around two in three people said they were satisfied overall with the accuracy of their bills (67%, up from 64% in Spring 2023) and customer service received (65%, up from 59%). The increase in levels of satisfaction on these measures means that satisfaction now matches the levels observed in Spring 2022.

More than half (55%) were satisfied that they had been given a fair deal. This is up from 48% in Spring 2023, but slightly lower than Spring 2022 (60%).

Few said they were 'very satisfied' with any of the three aspects of service: 18% for accuracy of bills, 18% for customer service, and 10% for getting a fair deal.

Figure 5.9: Satisfaction with different aspects of energy supplier service (based on all people excluding those who said this was not applicable), Spring 2022, Spring 2023, Spring 2024



SATISENERG. How satisfied or dissatisfied have you been with the following aspects of energy supplier(s)? If you have different suppliers for gas and electricity, please think about your overall opinion.
 Base: All wave respondents excluding those who say 'not applicable' – Spring 2022 / Spring 2023 / Spring 2024:
 The accuracy of your bills (4,155/4,177/3921); The customer service you have received (3,853/3,681/3454); That they have given you a fair deal (4,195/4,188/3934)

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Satisfaction with energy suppliers increased with age. Older respondents reported being more satisfied with the accuracy of their bills, with satisfaction for those aged over 44 ranging between 71% and 79% compared to 31% and 61% for those aged under 44. For customer service, those aged 45+ were also more likely to report satisfaction with the service provided by their energy supplier than those aged below 45 (between 61% and 67%, and between 31% and 52% respectively). Those aged 55+ also reported being more satisfied with their energy supplier in providing a fair deal (ranging between 60% and 72%) compared to those below 55 (ranging between 54% to 26%).

People who were managing well financially were also more likely to be satisfied with their energy supplier. For example, of those who considered they were 'doing alright' or 'living comfortably', 75% were satisfied with accuracy, compared with 64% of those just about getting by and 48% of those finding it difficult to manage. There was a similar difference by level of worry about energy bills. For example, of those not worried, 75% were satisfied with customer service compared with 61% of those who were worried.

People with a smart meter were slightly more likely to be both satisfied that they had been given a fair deal (59%, compared to 51% of those without one), satisfied with the accuracy of their bills (65%, compared to 62%) and with the customer service they had received (57%, compared with 53%).

Further findings on energy bills and tariffs

In previous waves, questions were included on other topics relating to energy bills and tariffs. The latest findings relating to these topics can be found as follows:

- Monitoring of energy use, see [Winter 2023 report on energy bills and tariffs](#) - section on 'Smart meters'.
- Self-reported knowledge on reducing energy use, see [Winter 2023 report on energy bills and tariffs](#) - section on 'Knowledge about reducing energy use in the home'.
- Changes made in last two years to reduce energy use, see [Summer 2023 report on energy bills and tariffs](#) - section on 'Changes in energy use made in the last two years'.
- How energy bills are paid, see [Summer 2023 report on energy bills and tariffs](#) - section on 'Cost of energy bills'.
- Attitudes towards government financial support to households to help with energy bills, see [Summer 2023 report on energy bills and tariffs](#) - section on 'Government support for energy bills'.
- Time of Use tariffs, see [Winter 2023 report on energy bills and tariffs](#) - section on 'Time of use electricity tariffs'.
- Smart electric vehicle charging, see [Winter 2023 report on energy bills and tariffs](#) - section on 'Smart electric vehicle charging'.
- Energy smart appliances, see [Summer 2022 report on energy bills and tariffs](#) - section on 'Energy smart appliances'.



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