

2010 EPRG Public Opinion Survey:

Policy Preferences and Energy Saving Measures

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This paper reports the results from our 2010 opinion poll survey of more than 2000 adults in Great Britain, conducted on our behalf by Accent. The results indicate that since the global financial crisis of 2008, energy and environmental concerns have decreased in priority in the view of the public, and respondents are more sceptical of government interventions in electricity markets.

The share of individuals reporting that they experience serious hardship due to energy prices has gone down since the peak of energy prices in October 2008. Around 14% of respondents report experiencing severe hardship due to energy prices in 2010 compared to 18.4% in 2008. During the peak energy prices in 2008, there was an increase in switching of energy providers. Since then incidences of switching have decreased.

Energy efficiency measures have higher uptake than in previous years, but the widespread measures are those that are cheaper and easier to implement. Three quarters of the respondents think that government should enforce energy-efficiency standards for appliances. However, they are more willing to compromise on the price than on performance of appliances as a result of such laws. While roughly half of the respondents would agree to have detailed metered consumption information recorded by their energy providers through smart meters, they are wary of having their data available to other entities. Local ownership is a potential motivating factor for public support for local, small-scale energy plants, but construction work at home and in the

neighbourhood are the potential discouraging factors from supporting such a plant.

There is scope for shifting discretionary electricity load during off-peak times, both through Time-of-Use tariffs and smart appliances that require limited user intervention. The activity that largest number of respondents will delay till after 9 PM if electricity is more expensive 7-9 PM, are watching TVs and using washing machines. Acceptance of supplier control of smart appliances is high, even for small discounts on the electricity bill, but the least popular measure is having usage of cookers restricted during critical peak times a few times per year. We find little indication that income, education, or the degree of hardship experienced as a result of higher fuel prices impacts willingness to accept a discount in exchange for the ability of the supplier to control appliance usage.

Overall, younger respondents are more likely to name environment as one of the policy priorities. They have less resistance to accepting innovative measures, such as having consumption data recorded through smart meters, and having a small-scale, low-carbon plant in their community. Policy priorities and values influence action: respondents who named environment as a policy priority were more likely to take proactive measures to decrease energy consumption, including carpooling more often or using public transportation.

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