



More in  
Common

**Energy Bills Public Sentiment Tracker -  
Not a new energy crisis, same old  
permacrisis  
March 2026**

# Summary

**Households are at breaking points as costs continue to rise, driving stress and anxiety.**

Four in five Britons are making lifestyle adjustments to manage rising costs, including reducing heating, cutting out holidays and spending less on going out

Anxiety about the impact of the Iran War is acute because most people feel like they can't bear a further increase in bills - if energy bills rise further, less than three in ten (27 per cent) say they will be able to absorb the costs.

**The impact of high energy bills goes beyond bank balances and is making parenting and family life harder.**

Two in five say energy bills have caused arguments at home. Even the highest earners argue over energy bills - 41 per cent of those earning over £100,000 say that they've argued with their household over energy usage.

**The political consequences of this ongoing crisis are significant and will only grow if energy bills continue to rise.**

Reform UK and the Greens are drawing support from the most financially insecure and could gain more as higher energy costs increase dissatisfaction with the status quo.

**Narrowly targeted Government support could lead to backlash as many feel they are only just about managing.**

# Research Approach

## Quantitative

A survey of adults in Great Britain weighted according to gender and age interlocked, region, ethnicity, 2024 General Election vote and education level.

This report used polling insights from fieldwork: 13 - 16 March, Sample size: 2,402 GB adults, 20 - 23 March 2026  
Sample: 2,408 GB adults and 15 - 18 August 2025, sample size: 2000.

This research builds on findings from [Britain's High Energy Bills: The Permacrisis that keeps on burning](#). This research is the first installment as part of a quarterly tracker, that will measure changes in British sentiment toward energy bills and their impact on British politics.

## Focus Group

More in Common organised and moderated one focus group with parents in Stoke-on-Trent Central and Birmingham Perry Barr on Thursday the 19th March. This research also builds on insights from previous focus groups held in Stevenage and Wolverhampton.

Full recruitment criteria is in the appendix.

**Energy bills are the coal  
face of the Cost of Living  
Crisis**

# Energy bills are now the biggest source of cost of living concerns

The high cost of living is Britons' top concern. A growing proportion (59 per cent) say they don't think the cost of living crisis will ever end. High energy bills have been central to public anxiety since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

In August last year 67 per cent of Britons selected grocery prices as one of their biggest drivers of their cost of living struggles - tied with energy bills, selected by 66 per cent.

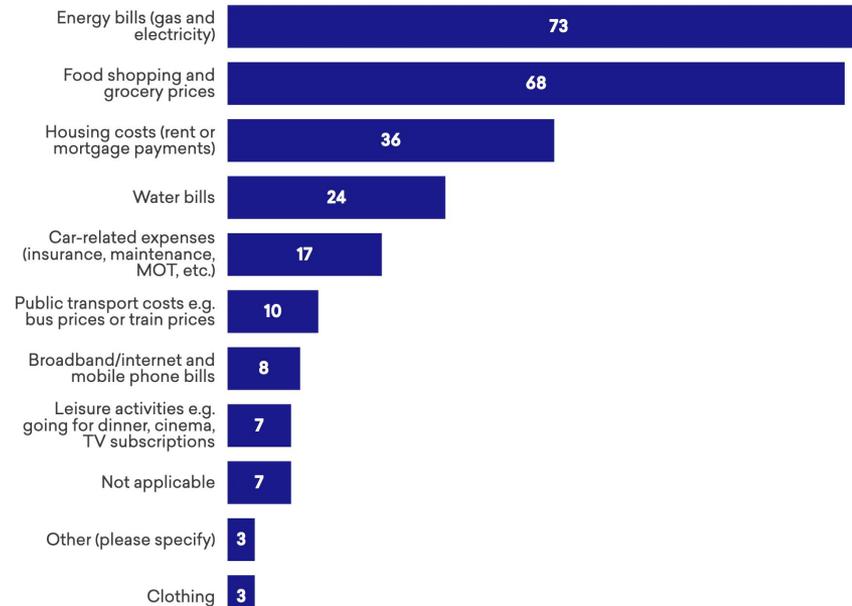
However, **energy bills have now overtaken food prices and are now Britons' biggest source of cost of living concern** - nearly three quarters (73 per cent) say it is one of their top concerns.

This is mirrored in focus group conversations where Britons cite the cost of electricity and gas as the biggest challenge they are facing.

*"I find really it's fuel and food. Well, and obviously your gas and electric, your utilities, they always used to go up, but it just seems this past few years that they've just been ... They've never been hiked as high as they have been"* Peter

## Energy bills are now the biggest driver of cost of living concern, rising above food shopping and grocery prices

Which of the following are causing you to be most concerned about the cost of living at the moment? Please select up to three.



# Four in five Britons are cutting back on their heating or discretionary spending to cope with their energy bills

With a high degree of precision, Britons anticipated what action they were going to have to take over the Winter to cope with the cost of energy. Expected actions in August 2025 mirror almost exactly the actions people reported they had taken by March 2026.

Only 19 per cent of Britons say they did not have to adjust their lifestyle and living habits to be able to meet the cost of energy bills and even after years of feeling the squeeze of high bills, Britons were still cutting back more on home heating this Winter.

In focus groups, there's a frustration and incredulity - that in a country like Britain many are now having to choose between essentials.

*"So energy bills are massive and they affect everybody in the country pretty much....So you've got people who are literally designing between heating the house or feeding the kids, and that is a poor state of affairs for a country like ours."* Amy, Stoke

## Britons had to take all expected cut backs to cope with the cost of energy bills last winter

Which of the below do you think **you might have to take / did you have to do** to help meet the costs of your energy bills this winter?



**The pressure created by  
high energy bills extends  
beyond purse strings - it's  
tearing families apart**

# Energy bills are driving a wedge in between families - and make being a parent harder

Parents often speak about the extra household strain that the high cost of energy has created. Some mention meticulous switching off and unplugging sockets before leaving the house, others mention revised heating schedules to maximise on warmth, whilst keeping costs low.

For others, such as Penelope, they find themselves having to choose between heating or eating and sending her children to bed early for warmth, to avoid putting on the heating.

One in three (33 per cent) parents of younger children (under 10) say that energy bills are a significant cause of anxiety and stress.

*“When it’s cold - get to bed, wrap up - I make that choice. Boys, get your dressing going on and get in your bed and do not put the heating on because in the end the bill is going higher and higher. It’s either heat or food. You can’t do both. Well, I can’t.”* **Penelope, Birmingham**

*“Before I leave the house now, so if I leave for work on the Wednesday morning, I literally switch all the plug sockets off in the house, but I even go as far now as unplugging the sockets. So unplugging everything just so that it’s literally, there is no risk of using any form of electricity...And you shouldn’t have to live like that..... My son says to me now, he says, “Why are you switching everything off? Why are you unplugging everything?”* **Tom, Stoke**

*“My son’s nearly 13 and my husband’s always like, ‘James, you’ve left your bedroom light on again. James have left your TV on again.’ And that’s all to do with the cost really.... You’re just constantly nagging and turn that off, turn that off.”* **Hayley, Stoke**

# Few mothers see an end in sight to the high cost of energy

Under a quarter (24 per cent) of mothers expect their energy bills will become affordable within the next few years and despite government schemes, just 12 per cent expect their bills to become more affordable this year or next.

**In contrast 63 per cent of mothers are not sure their bills will ever become more affordable.** Five points higher than the national average and nine points higher than the proportion of fathers who say the same.

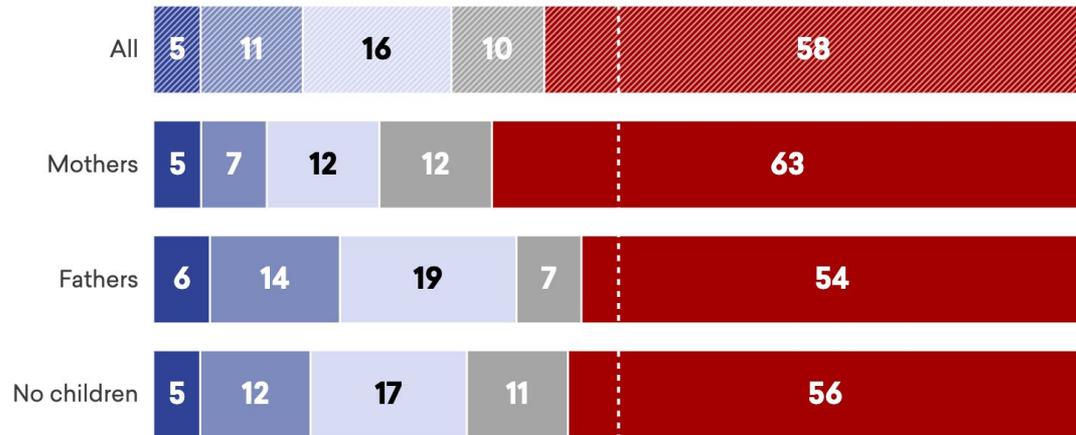
Energy bills make the job of parenting harder - for mothers there is even less hope that this burden will soon ease.

*"I don't want that translating onto my children. So I don't physically do anything, but I do say, look, heating on, get inside quickly, close the door, do we need to do this?"* Victoria, Birmingham

## 63 per cent of mothers are not sure energy bills will ever become more affordable

While economic conditions are difficult to predict, when do you expect energy bills to become more affordable?

- This year
- Sometime next year
- In the next few years
- Don't know
- I'm not sure they ever will



# One third of families with younger children will not be able to cope with further price increases

Just nine per cent of parents of children under 18, who are most likely to be living at home- say they will be able to absorb the extra costs of rising energy prices.

**In contrast, one third (32 per cent) say they will not be able to cope financially in the face of rising bills.**

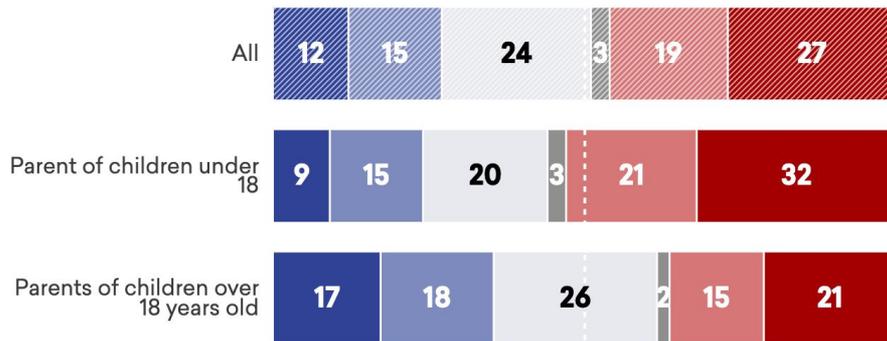
The effects of energy costs seem to disproportionately affect families with younger children.

Just ten percent of parents with young children (under the age of 5) say they do not worry about energy bills, while over a third (36 per cent) say worrying about energy bills has been a significant source of stress and anxiety for them. This is 16 points above the national average of 20 per cent.

## Less than one in ten parents with children under the age of 18 say they will be able to absorb energy price costs

Which of the following comes closest to your view about your finances and energy bills?

- 1 - If energy prices rise further, I will be able to absorb the extra cost
- 2
- 3
- Don't know
- 4
- 5 - If energy prices rise further, I will not be able to cope financially and will have to cut back on essentials



**Britons increasingly  
blame war for high bills -  
but the buck still stops the  
Government**

# Despite the impact of geopolitical events Britons say the government is most responsible for their high energy bills

Britons now place more blame on geopolitical events than in the Autumn - 62 per cent now place some blame on the War in Ukraine for Britain's high household energy bills (up 11 per cent).

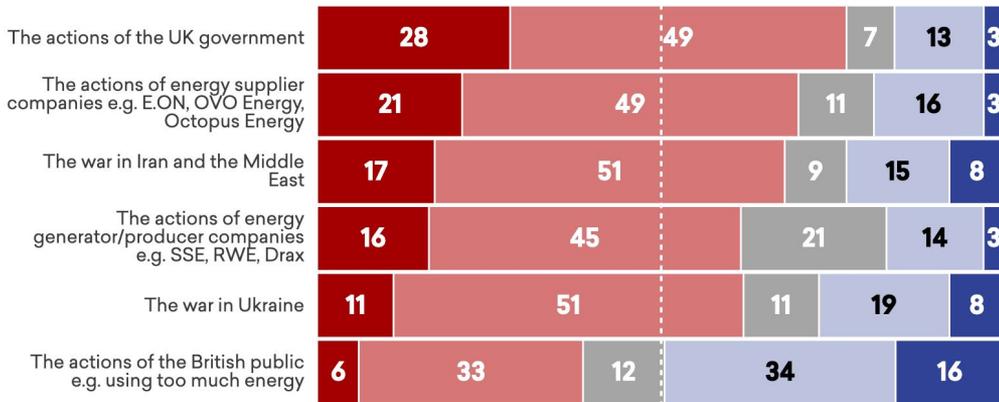
Britons place greater blame on the war in Iran and the Middle East than the war in Ukraine, almost one in five (17 per cent) say that the war in Iran is almost entirely responsible for Britain's high household energy bills, despite any increases in from recent geopolitical events not impacting bills until July. Two thirds (68 per cent) of Britons place at least some blame on the war in Iran and the Middle East.

However, the UK Government is still widely seen as the primary cause of high bills - three quarters of Britons (77 per cent) say the Government is either almost entirely or somewhat responsible.

## Britons are already blaming high energy bills on the war in Iran - but the government and energy companies get the most blame

Please indicate, in your opinion, how responsible, if at all, the following are for Britain's high household energy bills?

● Almost entirely responsible ● Somewhat responsible ● Don't know ● Not very responsible ● Not at all responsible



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*"but I think that is what we will be told. {The war in Iran} is why fuel is going up. And the energy companies obviously will follow tack and say, "Yeah, yeah, it's definitely, as the government has said, the price of a barrel has gone up to this...." So yeah, I think that's the sort of rhetoric that they'll use"* Peter

# More Britons have heard about governments plan, but fewer than one in five think they will bring down bills

This polling was conducted following the decision in the budget in November to remove certain levies off energy bills. Since the last round of polling, the Prime Minister has made a number of interventions attempting to centre tackling the cost of living as this government's number one priority.

There are signs these announcements have had some, albeit limited, cut through. **On household energy bills, the proportion saying the government has no plan at all has dropped from 36 per cent to 25 per cent.**

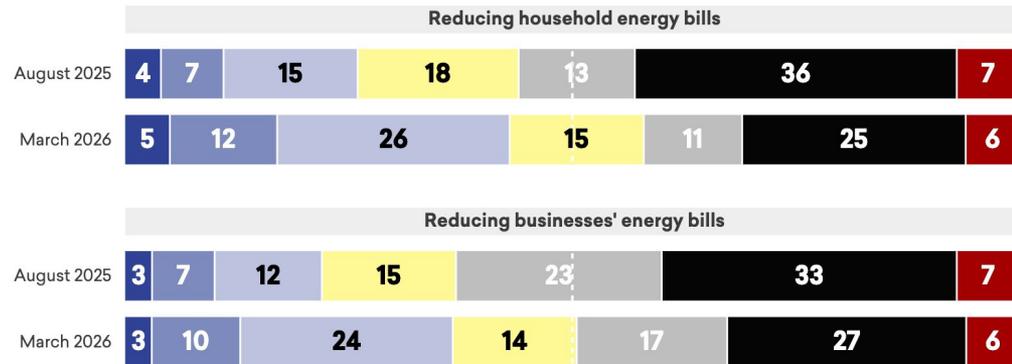
However, the percentage of Britons who think this plan is working now or will start working soon has increased by just six per cent.

Belief that the government is at least trying to do something to bring bills down may have grown, but trust in the government to successfully achieve this remains stubbornly low.

## More Britons think that the Government has a plan to bring down bills, but few think it will work

Please indicate the extent to which you think the government has an effective plan to achieve the following:

- They have a plan and it's already working
- They have a plan and it should start working soon
- They have a plan but I have no confidence it will start working soon
- They have a plan but I have no confidence it will ever work
- Don't know
- They have no plan at all
- They have a plan but it's making things worse



# Government is not always seen to care about energy bills

In focus group conversations, Britons reveal their anxieties about the impact that the war in Iran will have on energy bills - and the knock on impact on the economy. However, there is a wider sense that while geopolitics might play a role, the buck ultimately stops with the energy companies and the Government, who many see as colluding to raise prices. Parents in focus groups have not heard of any government action to bring down bills

This included the energy price cap, a measure seen by the group as ineffective at stopping prices from rising, and deliberately confusing. Many parents tend to think the government could act to protect people from energy bills, but chooses not to. This was either because Government did not care, or politicians profited themselves

*"No, they say they're going to do something, but they never do. No. They just make us believe that they're doing it." Mike*

*"It does nothing. It does nothing for the consumers. It really doesn't. I mean, energy price go up, it doesn't come down. And if it does come down, I don't think the consumers benefit at all. The price cap is for the people who supply, So the big companies, not us little people." Penelope*

*"So these are the people that they're called the government because they govern this country. Do you know what I mean? Everything has to go through them. So they're the people in power. They're the people that can sign things off. They're the people that make the rules. So it is definitely the government at fault with it" Tom*

*"[The Price Cap] just something to put out there to make you think, "Oh yeah, you're getting a deal." There's no deal in it. I'm still spending the same money, if not more, each year. So yeah, it's just something to throw out. It sounds good, doesn't it?" Ron*



# **Precarity and Pessimism - Driving voters away from Labour**

# Those struggling with energy bills are most unhappy with the status quo

The Autumn research outlined how the sense that government is standing by idly as Britons are exploited feeds anti-system sentiment. That in turn is driving voters away from the established parties.

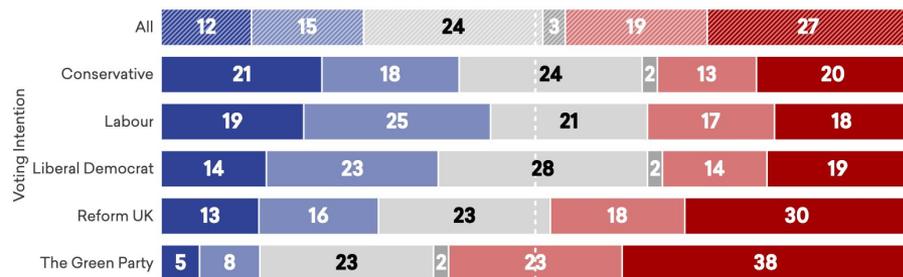
An increase in energy bills, beyond what already feels unaffordable for many Britons, risks compounding this further.

In focus groups, parents explain their frustration that the government could afford to protect Britons from price shocks, but chooses not to. Some felt this was because the government benefited from high energy bills. If energy bills are to rise dramatically again, then the sense that the system simply isn't working for ordinary people will likely rise with it encouraging voters to roll the dice on newer more untested parties.

## Only 13 per cent of Green voters feel like they could absorb the extra cost if energy bills rise

Which of the following comes closest to your view about your finances and energy bills? Please use the scale to indicate your answer, where 1 means you fully agree with the first statement and 5 means you fully agree with the second statement.

- 1 - If energy prices rise further, I will be able to absorb the extra cost ● 2 ● 3  
● Don't know ● 4  
● 5 - If energy prices rise further, I will not be able to cope financially and will have to cut back on essentials



# Labour switchers are more pessimistic than loyalists

The war in Iran itself has not had a large impact on Britons' expectations for when energy bills may become more affordable. The pessimism is already baked into public opinion.

This pessimism can go some way to explain Labour's fall in support since the 2024 General Election. The voters who backed Labour in 2024, and now say they would vote Labour in a general election are far more positive about the trajectory of affordability of energy bills, with more than half saying they will become cheaper in the next few years.

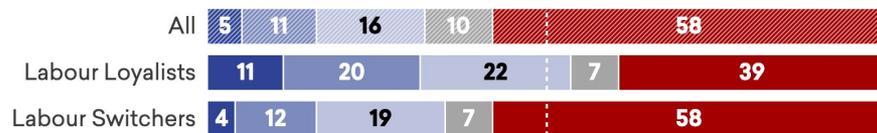
Meanwhile, Britons as a whole - including those who supported Labour in 2024 and now intend to vote for a different party - are far more pessimistic. Almost three in five (58 per cent) say that they aren't sure energy bills will ever get more affordable.

In short a lack of confidence that the Government can deliver more affordable energy bills is playing a role in driving voters away from the Labour Party, while those who have greater confidence are sticking with the party.

## Those who have left Labour since voting for them in 2024 are as pessimistic as the rest of Britain about energy bills

While economic conditions are difficult to predict, when do you expect energy bills to become more affordable?

- This year
- Sometime next year
- In the next few years
- Don't know
- I'm not sure they ever will



More in Common • March 2026. Labour Loyalists are those who voted Labour in 2024 and are now modelled to vote for a different party, Labour Switchers are those who voted Labour in 2024 and are now modelled to vote Labour

*"So I wouldn't necessarily believe that the coming autumn prices are going to improve. If anything, they're going to get a heck of a lot worse." Peter*

# Women are most affected

The impact of energy bills in driving anti-system sentiment is not felt equally.

Women are the most likely to say they've had to make lifestyle changes to deal with the cost of energy. Only 16 per cent of women say they did not have to take action to cope with the cost of energy bills this winter. (for men this figure is 22 per cent)

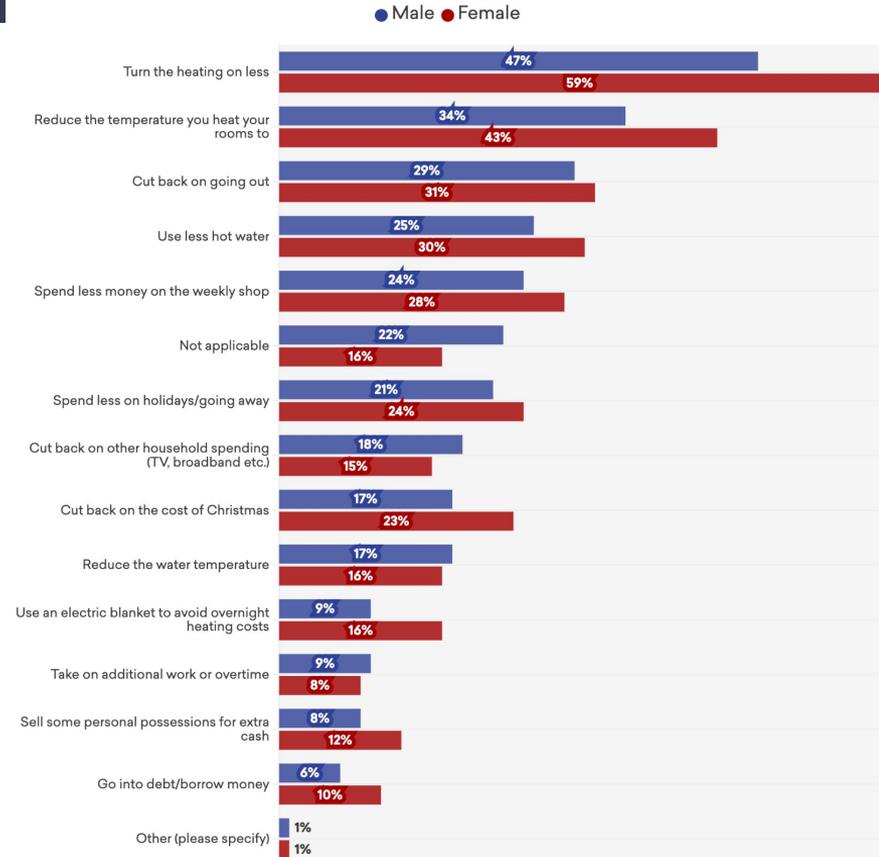
Meanwhile, women are also more likely to say that energy bills have caused them increased stress and anxiety (34 per cent in women against 28 per cent in men)

Those pressures in turn make women less likely to think that the system or status quo is working for them. 44 per cent of women say our political and social institutions should burn rather than be preserved and improved, compared to 38 per cent of men.

## Women are more likely than men to have taken action to cope with their energy bills last winter

Which of the below did you have to do to help meet the costs of your energy bills this winter?

Please select all that apply



**With many Britons  
*just-about-managing*,  
shielding only the most  
vulnerable could result in  
a real backlash**

# Energy bills are creating stress for Britons of almost all income levels

Britons earning below £70,000 per year are more likely than not to say energy bills have made them more stressed and more anxious. The corrosive impact of high energy bills on public mood extends beyond just those on the lowest income and well into middle England.

The bewilderment and anger that even those on salaries that are supposed to allow them to feel comfortable are still facing financial insecurity emerges in focus group conversations. Participants speak about their frustration at working hard in a good jobs and still struggling to afford to keep their homes at a comfortable temperature.

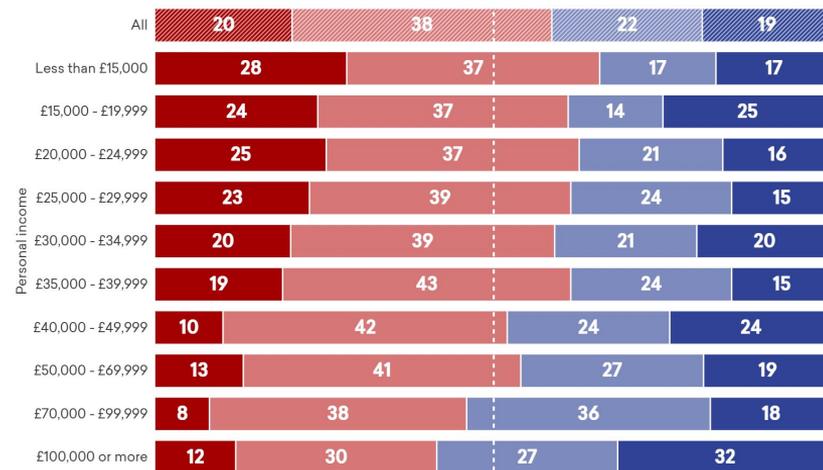
*"I actually had one day where it was very, very cold and I was trying not to put on the heating and I mean, slippers, jumper, and I had my dressing gown on. I look like an idiot. And I was thinking, if my boss calls now, I'm going to look like just so silly or a client calls and they want a Teams call and there's me sitting there, my purple, fluffy gown during the day, I'm going to look right wally"*

**Victoria, Birmingham**

## Britons earning less than £70,000 are more likely than not to say energy bills have caused them stress and anxiety

Which of the following comes closest to your view about energy bills and your wellbeing?

- Worrying about energy bills has been a significant source of stress and anxiety for me
- Worrying about energy bills has added to my stress, but is not a major source of it
- Worrying about energy bills has had no impact on my stress or anxiety levels
- I don't worry about energy bills



# Middle income Britons don't feel they will be able to cope with an increase in bills

Forecasts suggests that bills could rise by 20 per cent again in July due to the Iran War.

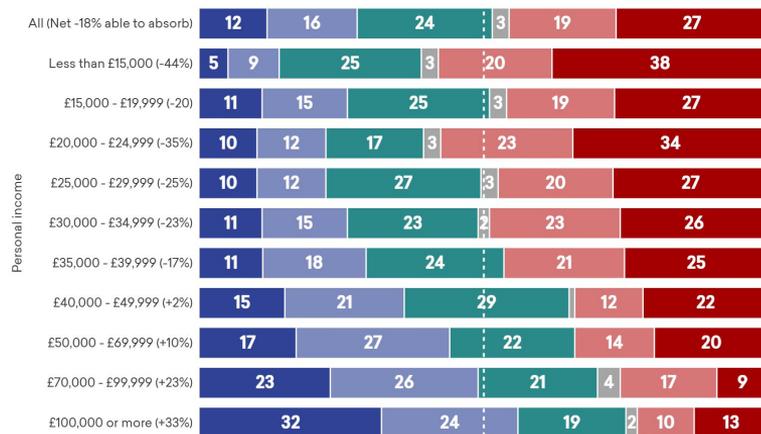
The extent of financial insecurity in Britain means the impact could be significant- only those earning more than £40,000 per year are more likely than not to say they feel they will be able to absorb further bill increases. Overall 46 per cent of Britons say they won't be able to cope financially if bills increase further compared to just 28 per cent who say they would be able to absorb this extra cost.

The breadth of this feeling of vulnerability means that any government response which targets help only at the poorest households or those on benefits is likely to be poorly received.

## Only Britons earning more than £40,000 are likely to feel they can cope with an increase in energy bills

Which of the following comes closest to your view about your finances and energy bills? Please use the scale to indicate your answer, where 1 means you fully agree with the first statement and 5 means you fully agree with the second statement.

- 1 - If energy prices rise further, I will be able to absorb the extra cost ● 2 ● 3  
 ● Don't know ● 4  
 ● 5 - If energy prices rise further, I will not be able to cope financially and will have to cut back on essentials



# In an increasingly zero-sum politics, being seen to only help those on the lowest incomes risks angering those ‘just about managing’

The strength of zero-sum politics has grown in Britain in tandem with rising feelings of economic insecurity. Across focus group conversations, middle income Britons express frustration that while they work hard they feel that nothing they can do will make them better off. This is driving resentment towards those those who they feel aren't working as hard as them or contributing to the system such as asylum seekers and those on benefits, but who appear thanks to Government to be just as well off as them.

This zero-sum approach to politics means that if the government targets support only at the most vulnerable, they risk angering those who are just about managing and who may be slightly better off on paper but who don't currently feel like this is the case.

During the last wave of energy bill research focus group participants reacted angrily to the idea that their bills could be increased to fund support for more vulnerable households in the form of a Social Tariff and an expanded Warm Homes Discount Scheme.

*“I think the government should focus on bringing down everyone's energy bills and treating people equally. I work part-time and I'm on my own but because I earn over a certain amount, I'm not entitled to help. I struggle, just cause I work part-time and others don't work at all, why should I not receive support but others do because they are not working”*

**Katherine, Stevenage**

*“So basically we are going to pay for other people to be able to heat their home, while we can't afford to heat our homes. Amazing. It's just mental who comes up with this crap? Do they just sit there? Is the government going to be paying an extra 15 pounds out of their wages to help this as well? Or is it just us bloody robots?”*

**Sarah, Stevenage**

*“The rich want to get richer...Then it leaves even the middle class and whatever, getting poorer. And I feel it's so unfair the way we are being treated.”* **Penelope, Birmingham**

# Britons want renewables to be the solution

In the face of an insecure energy supply, there is no clamour from the British Public to turn to oil and gas as the solution.

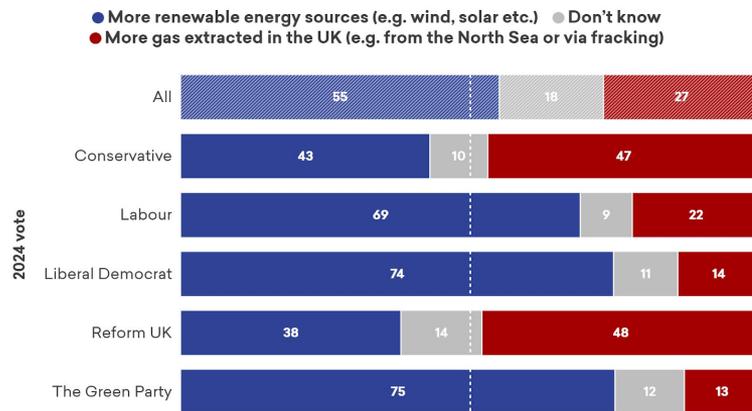
There is a clear public preference for renewable energy over increased domestic gas extraction. In focus group conversations Britons point to renewables as the only way for Britain to guarantee its energy independence and energy security in the long term - and to avoid being repeatedly hit by the impact of international energy crises.

Support for renewables is particularly strong among Labour (69 per cent), Liberal Democrat (75 per cent) and Green Party (75 per cent) voters.

Conservative and Reform UK voters are more divided, with higher support for increased domestic gas extraction. **48 per cent of Reform voters would rather extract more gas in the UK, while 38 per cent would rather produce more renewable energy.**

## Most Britons would rather replace imported gas with renewables than extract more gas in the UK

Imagine the UK were to import less gas from other countries to use in electricity generation. To account for this, would you rather the UK increase the amount of electricity generated using...?



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*"There's a couple of my friends that I know that have got solar panels on the roof...he showed me his bills, so I know he's getting the money back. So I know it's not something that I'm being told. I've actually seen his bills and I've seen the money that they're paying him back each month." Steve*



# Conclusion

# Key takeaways

## Energy bills are the biggest part of the biggest issue in British politics

The cost of living feels relentless, it dominates daily life for many in Britain. Energy bills are now the biggest cost of living concern.

## Energy bills are a wedge in family life

The routine of having to painstakingly switching everything off, and arguments with children over energy use make the job of being a parent harder and family life more fraught

## Britons do not think the government is trying to protect them from energy bills

Few have confidence that the government has a plan that will work to bring down bills. The price cap seems deliberately confusing and misleading.

## Slightly more Britons now think the government has a plan

Since August, there has been some limited cut through from the Government in demonstrating it has a plan to reduce bills. There has been far less progress in convincing people that this plan will work

## Many Britons feel energy bills are unaffordable, not just the most vulnerable

Across all income levels, energy bills are reported to cause anxiety and stress, and are the cause of arguments between households

## The public does not see oil and gas as the solution

Britons tend to believe that the future of energy security is through renewable energy, not oil and gas

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## Editorial information

This report forms part of More in Common's wider work on Britons' attitudes towards the cost of living and energy.

The survey and focus groups referenced in this report and the writing of this report has been funded by Electrify Britain.

More in Common has maintained, as is the case for all of our partnership work, full editorial independence when conducting this research and writing this report. The views expressed within this report are therefore the views of More in Common.

The full survey and data tables can be found on our website and the recruitment criteria used for the focus groups is outlined in the appendix.



# Appendix

# Focus Group Recruitment Criteria

- Parents of teenagers
- The main bill payers for their energy bills
- Constituencies:
  - a. Stoke-on-Trent Central
  - b. Birmingham Perry Barr
- Voted Labour in 2024, now considering voting for either Reform UK or The Green Party

For focus group participants from this round of research, pseudonyms have been used in the reporting of these quotations