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Making a positive difference
for energy consumers

Consumer survey 2021 - Young energy consumers (aged 16-24)

Introduction

This document presents a summary of findings from the 2021 Ofgem Consumer Survey relating to decarbonisation and climate change, focusing specifically on the attitudes and behaviours of young energy consumers (aged 16-24).

The survey interviewed 4,037 energy consumers in Great Britain who were solely or jointly responsible for their household's energy bills.[1] Within this, 192 were energy consumers aged 16-24. Note that this sample only includes bill paying younger energy consumers so is not representative of all consumers in that age bracket. Fieldwork was conducted from 19th August to 17th September 2021.

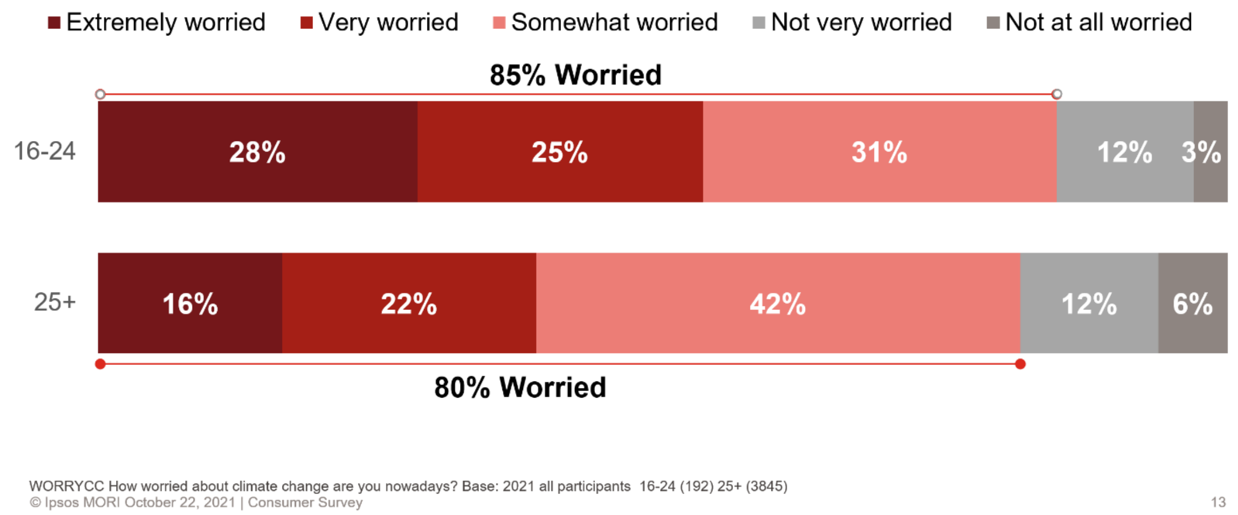
Key Findings

16-24 year old energy consumers are more likely to be worried about climate change and more actively engaged in their day to day energy use

When asked how worried they are about climate change, energy consumers aged 16-24 were more likely than their older counterparts to say they were extremely worried, though levels of worry were high amongst all age groups.

[1] The survey was conducted online by Ipsos MORI, with the sample drawn from online access panels, and quotas were used to deliver a broadly representative sample of energy consumers in Britain. Minor weighting was applied to bring profiles in line with national estimates, and only weighted data is shown.

Figure 1: Energy consumers' concerns about climate change by age



16-24 year old energy consumers' level of understanding of how much energy they use at home, and of concern about their home energy usage was similar to their older counterparts, but they were more likely to be active in monitoring their home energy use (49% of 16-24 year olds said they do this always / most of the time, vs 36% of those aged 25+). This may be linked to the fact that they are more likely to have a smart meter at home (61% vs 49% of those aged 25+).

Ownership of low carbon/smart technology is higher among young energy consumers

Energy consumers aged 16-24 were more likely than their older counterparts to have low carbon and smart technologies in their home. 42% of 16-24 year olds said they have at least one of the following in their home - an electric vehicle, Solar PV, smart appliances / heating controls or a heat pump, compared to 24% of those aged 25+.

A quarter (26%) of 16-24 year old energy consumers said their household has any smart appliance or heating (e.g. smart washing machine, smart lights, smart heating controls), compared with 17% of those aged 25+.

16-24 year old energy consumers were more likely than their older counterparts to have electric vehicles in their household – 9% had a fully electric vehicle, compared to 2% of those aged 25+. However, they were no more likely to have solar panels. This may be linked to young peoples' living arrangements, as they were more likely than their older counterparts to live in rented accommodation, more modern properties, and flats, which might make it less appropriate for them to make structural changes to their homes.

Young energy consumers are more open to adopting low carbon technologies and using energy flexibly

Looking at potential future behaviours, it is clear that 16-24 year old energy consumers are more open than their older counterparts to adopting further low carbon technologies in the future, and to using energy in different ways.

Intentions to uptake electric vehicles was higher; 33% of 16-24 year old energy consumers who don't already have an electric vehicle said they are likely to change their household's car or van to an electric or plug-in hybrid in the next five years (compared to 24% of consumers aged 25+).

They were also more open to using energy more flexibly in the future (e.g. having smart heating controls, smart appliances or smart EV charging controlled by external companies), and to feel comfortable with external companies doing this. Half (51%) of energy consumers aged 16-24 said they would be likely to use smart heating controlled by an external company in the future, vs 36% 25+s. 36% who said they would feel comfortable with an external company controlling smart appliances, heating or EV charging, vs 20% of 25+s.

Taken together, the higher levels of concern and engagement amongst young energy consumers, coupled with greater openness to adopting new low carbon technologies and flexible energy use, provide some positive indicators of behaviours that will support net zero.