

Consumer Awareness of Suppliers' CSR Initiatives

Summary Report
March 2007

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Introduction and Methodology

Ofgem commissioned Ipsos MORI to conduct a face-to-face survey representative of the population of Great Britain (GB) aged 15+. The objective of the research was to evaluate awareness of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives in support of its Social Action Strategy

The research vehicle chosen was Ipsos MORI's omnibus survey, known as the Capibus, for which the fieldwork dates were 19-25 January 2007, achieving 2,025 computer-assisted personal interviews

All data was collected on Ipsos MORI's weekly Omnibus.

Our Omnibus delivers a nationally and regionally representative sample of 2000 adults aged 15+ in GB (also available in France, Germany, Italy and Spain).

All interviews are carried out in-home using computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI).

Selection of Respondents

The sample in every country employs a minimum of 80 sampling points and rising to over 225 points for the larger markets. This ensures interviewing is spread over a large geographical area rather than clustered around just a few centres.

In Britain we use up to 210 sampling points selected every week (ie one point per week per political constituency), employ ACORN to improve the representativeness of the sample across the social grades and set quota controls specific to each interviewer location. By using this proven sample design, we represent all sub-sectors of the population - at a national and regional level.

Quality Control

We employ the strictest quality control procedures. In all markets our interviewers are trained to a recognised standard and one-in-ten interviews are back-checked by telephone. Furthermore, we use the CAPI software to monitor both the overall length of each interview (the average interview length does not exceed 26 minutes) and the time taken over individual questions in the questionnaire.

In Great Britain, Ipsos MORI is ISO9001, BS7911 and ISO 20252 accredited - a mark of our commitment to quality.

Data Processing

All Capibus data is processed in-house by Ipsos MORI

Weighting

A rim weighting system is applied which weights to Market Research Society (MRS) defined profiles for age, social grade, region and working status - within sex. The idea of rim weighting is to provide the 'best weighting', or least distorting, by using computing power to run a large number of solutions from which the best is chosen.

In order to correct minor deviations in terms of the generated sample profile week on week, omnibus services use a variety of weighting procedures. Clearly, the more effective the sampling the less the need to rely on weighting to resolve problems.

Throughout the report an asterisk (*) refers to any proportion less than one half of one per cent. Where percentages do not sum to 100 this is due to computer rounding or, in the case of the summary tables, to the exclusion of “don’t know” and “no answer” categories.

Summary

- The majority of domestic energy consumers would take some sort of positive action if they were having difficulty paying their bills. Just over half state they would contact their supplier and, of the remainder, some would contact third party organisations such as the Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB) or energywatch. A minority would make their own arrangements or alterations to their behaviour to deal with the difficulty in paying - for example 10% would reduce their energy use, and there is some indication vulnerable customers (such as social group E) would be marginally more likely to do this.
- Spontaneous awareness of the kinds of assistance available from suppliers to customers who are having payment difficulties is relatively low. Over two-thirds are not aware of any of the measures available. When prompted about the type of help that might be available awareness rises, with the proportion of people unaware of any help falling eight points to 60%. Best known measures are reduced tariffs and money-off offers. Social groups D and E and prepayment meter customers are most aware and the 65+ age group are least aware.
- If they wanted more information on the help available, a majority (59%) would obtain further information by contacting their supplier. Minorities would search the internet or contact a third party organisation. Four percent would wait for suppliers to contact them.
- A wide range of answers are given on who might qualify for such assistance, though the responses suggest people have a generally good idea of what sorts of people are included. Customers are most likely to answer that it includes the elderly, people on low incomes and people on benefits. Fewer mention the disabled or sick and those in debt.
- Eight in ten say they would accept such assistance. Vulnerable customer groups are just as willing as other groups to accept help.
- Those people who would **not** accept help give a range of reasons, chief among these being that they don't want or need it (26%). This view is particularly widespread among the 65+, PPM users and customers in Scotland. Fifteen percent believe they would not qualify, including some in social group E. 15% of respondents who would not accept help were sceptical about the value of the offer ("don't believe you can get something for nothing") -with this view more common among electricity PPM customers, people living in Wales and the middle age group (although sample sizes are small given that the vast majority of customers said that they would accept help.. Ten percent don't understand the offers, rising to 16% of social groups D and E.

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Customer reaction to experiencing difficulty paying

Q2 What would you do first if you were having difficulties paying your supplier for your gas or electricity usage?

	All	Social Group AB	Social Group E	Direct-Debit (Gas)	PPM (Gas)	Age 15-34	Age 65+	Wales	Scotland	Rented
<i>Base: All with mains gas/electricity in home</i>	(1,919) %	(391) %	(256) %	(800) %	(174) %	(549) %	(454) %	(178) %	(188) %	(557) %
Contact your energy provider	56	58	48	64	61	45	49	49	61	51
Reduce the amount of energy I use	10	13	12	11	10	10	11	13	13	10
Contact the Citizen's Advice Bureau	5	4	5	4	5	4	7	5	2	4
Borrow money	4	4	4	4	4	7	3	1	4	5
Try and get other person to pay	4	4	4	2	2	6	4	4	1	4
Contact other adviser	2	2	3	1	2	1	6	4	1	2
Contact energywatch	1	2	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	2
Stop payment	1	1	1	1	1	3	*	*	1	1
Delay payment	1	1	2	1	1	2	*	*	*	2
Other	3	4	3	2	4	3	2	3	1	3
Don't know	14	10	17	8	10	20	17	20	15	15

Source: Ipsos MORI

Just over half of all energy customers (56%) would contact their supplier if they were having difficulty paying. Among the remainder, a few would contact third party advisers such as the CAB, energywatch or other advisers, so a majority of consumers would take some sort of positive action. The main alternative response is likely to be to alter their own behaviour – reduce the energy used, stop or delay payment, borrow money or try to get someone else to help out with the bill, but only a relatively small minority would take these courses. There are indications that the proportions that would reduce their energy consumption are somewhat higher among social group E and in Wales and Scotland.

The proportion of people who do not know what action to take varies across groups – with awareness in Wales and the younger age group being the lowest.

Awareness of assistance available

Q3a *What kinds of assistance, if any, are you aware of that gas and electricity suppliers offer for customers who have difficulties paying their bills?* (SPONTANEOUS)

	All	Age 65+	Social Group E	Social Group D	Social Group AB	Direct Debit (Gas)	PPM (Gas)	Scotland
<i>Base: All with mains gas/electricity in home</i>	(1,919)	(454)	(256)	(454)	(304)	(800)	(174)	(188)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Reduced tariffs	12	11	15	12	11	11	18	13
Money off offers	7	6	8	9	6	5	13	3
Funds or grants from suppliers	5	4	5	8	5	5	3	4
A check to see a customer is receiving all benefits entitled to	5	4	6	6	5	4	7	5
Other	5	4	5	3	7	6	8	2
Don't know/none	68	74	64	67	71	70	55	73

Source: Ipsos MORI

Spontaneous awareness of the various CSR assistance available is relatively low – over two-thirds are not aware of any. The availability of reduced tariffs is best known (by 12%) and only around one in twenty are aware of each of the other initiatives. There is little variation in awareness by demographic group, though there is some indication that the 65+ age group is less likely to be aware – the group most likely to have been exposed to these types of offers.

Q3b *Have you previously seen or been given information about any of these types of help that customers can get from their gas and electricity suppliers?* **PROMPTED AWARENESS**

	All	Age 65+	Social Group E	Social Group D	Social Group AB	Direct Debit (Gas)	PPM (Gas)	Scotland
<i>Base: All with mains gas/electricity in home</i>	(1,919)	(454)	(256)	(304)	(391)	(800)	(174)	(188)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Reduced tariffs	13	11	18	12	11	12	20	13
Money off offers	10	7	11	13	7	8	15	4
Funds or grants from suppliers	7	4	7	8	5	7	8	2
A check to see a customer is receiving all benefits entitled to	6	6	8	6	6	7	6	6
Other	*	*	*	*	*	*	1	0
Don't know/none	72	77	63	68	78	73	61	79

Source: Ipsos MORI

Q3a /b *Have you previously seen or been given information about any of these types of help that customers can get from their gas and electricity suppliers? COMBINED AWARENESS*

	All	Age 65+	Social Group E	Social Group D	Social Group AB	Direct Debit (Gas)	PPM (Gas)	Scotland
<i>Base: All with mains gas/electricity in home</i>	<i>(1,919)</i>	<i>(454)</i>	<i>(256)</i>	<i>(304)</i>	<i>(391)</i>	<i>(800)</i>	<i>(174)</i>	<i>(188)</i>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Reduced tariffs	19	16	23	18	18	17	26	22
Money off offers	13	10	14	15	11	11	20	7
Funds or grants from suppliers	10	7	10	12	8	9	10	5
A check to see a customer is receiving all benefits entitled to	10	10	12	11	11	9	11	9
Other	6	4	5	3	7	6	8	2
Don't know/none	60	66	53	58	62	61	46	68

Source: Ipsos MORI

When prompted by showing them the list of four measures, and including any spontaneous mentions that may not have been repeated when prompted, awareness of each measure rises and, overall, the proportion that does not know of any measures falls by eight points, to 60%. Reduced tariffs continue to be best known (by almost one in five), followed by money-off offers.

Those on prepayment meters are a little more likely to be aware of most measures, especially reduced tariffs and money-off offers. Those in social groups D and E are also marginally more aware, with those in social group D particularly aware of money off offers and funds or grants from suppliers. On the other hand, elderly people (65+) are a little less aware than average, and Scottish awareness is lowest of the three regions.

How information would be obtained

Q4 *If you wanted it, how would you obtain information on the help suppliers can offer?* (SPONTANEOUS)

	All	Age 15-34	Age 35-64	Age 65+	Social Group D	Social Group E	Eng- land	Wales	Scot- land
<i>Base: All with mains gas/electricity in home</i>	(1,919) %	(549) %	(916) %	(454) %	(304) %	(256) %	(1,553) %	(178) %	(188) %
Contact your supplier for information	59	52	63	60	64	56	58	52	65
Search the internet for information	14	15	17	4	10	4	15	9	5
Contact a third party for information	8	7	7	13	10	9	8	10	7
Wait for your supplier to contact you	4	3	4	4	5	7	3	9	3
Would not want help	2	2	1	3	1	1	2	2	2
Get information from library/booklets	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	0
Other	1	*	1	2	1	*	1	3	2
Don't know	12	20	7	13	14	21	12	15	17

Source: Ipsos MORI

A majority (59%) would contact their supplier for information on the kinds of CSR assistance asked about. Minorities would search the internet or contact a third party. Four percent would wait for suppliers to contact them.

A majority of each age, social grade and region would contact their supplier, though the groups least likely to do so are the 15-34s and those in Wales and England. On the other hand, those in the middle and higher age groups and those in Scotland are more likely than most to contact their supplier. The internet is least likely to be used by the 65+, social groups D and E and those in Wales and Scotland.

Social group E, those aged 15-34 and those in Scotland were more likely to respond that they don't know how they would obtain information on the help that suppliers can offer.

Who is believed to qualify for assistance

Q5 Who do you think would qualify for help suppliers can offer? (SPONTANEOUS)

	All	Age 15-34	Age 35-64	Age 65+	Social Group D	Social Group E	Social Group AB	England	Wales	Scotland
<i>Base: All with mains gas/electricity in home</i>	(1,919) %	(549) %	(916) %	(454) %	(304) %	(256) %	(391) %	(1,553) %	(178) %	(188) %
The elderly	48	39	52	51	48	40	56	46	53	59
People on low income	42	41	43	41	40	33	48	41	51	45
People on benefits	39	37	45	29	38	28	41	39	46	33
The disabled or chronically sick	21	18	23	22	17	18	24	21	28	19
People in debt	12	14	12	8	13	9	10	12	16	10
Anyone	7	9	8	3	9	11	6	8	5	5
Other	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	1
Don't know	14	20	9	16	14	20	9	14	12	16

Source: Ipsos MORI

A wide range of answers is given in reply to the question of who respondents think would qualify for assistance. Many of these are, in fact, correct. Almost half (48%) answer it is the elderly, 42% cite people on low incomes and 39% people on benefits. Just 21% mention the disabled or chronically sick and 12% people in debt. Only very few (7%) believe anyone can qualify for such help, and just 14% don't know.

The youngest age group, 15-34s, is least likely to mention the elderly and most likely not to have an opinion. Social grade ABs are most likely to mention the elderly and several other groups – they are least likely to have no opinion. Those who are probably on benefits, the social group E, are least likely to respond that people on low income or benefits would qualify. The elderly are no more likely than middle-aged people to believe they, themselves, qualify. There are some differences between regions: in Scotland the elderly are more likely to be mentioned, but people on benefits, the disabled/sick and those in debt are less likely to be mentioned. In Wales people on benefits or low income, or the disabled/sick are more likely to be cited than elsewhere.

Likelihood of accepting help and reasons why not

Q6 *In the event that you were having difficulty paying your gas or electricity bill, would you personally accept any of the help (mentioned earlier)?*

	All	Age 15-34	Age 35-64	Age 65+	Social Group D	Social Group E	England	Wales	Scotland	PPM (elec)
<i>Base: All with mains gas/electricity in home</i>	(1,919) %	(549) %	(916) %	(454) %	(304) %	(256) %	(1,553) %	(178) %	(188) %	(222) %
Yes	81	77	84	82	80	84	82	86	73	86
No	19	23	16	18	20	16	18	14	27	14

Source: Ipsos MORI

The vast majority (81%) of energy customers would accept help if they were having difficulties paying their bills. The more vulnerable customer groups are just as willing to take up the help as other groups. Those in Scotland are less willing to ask for help than those in England and Wales.

Q7 **IF NOT: Why wouldn't you accept the help offered? (SPONTANEOUS)**

	All	Age 15-34	Age 35-64	Age 65+	Social Group D	Social Group E	England	Wales	Scotland	PPM (elec)
<i>Base: All who would not accept the help offered if they had difficulties</i>	(354) %	(126) %	(142) %	(86) %	(66) %	(43) %	(277) %	(26) %	(51) %	(29) %
Don't want it; don't need any help	26	23	24	34	25	13	24	21	36	34
Don't think I would qualify	15	13	19	12	11	5	16	9	15	10
Don't believe you can get something for nothing	15	12	18	14	12	12	15	18	11	21
Don't want it – too much hassle	11	12	10	13	14	19	12	15	9	17
Don't trust suppliers	10	7	13	12	8	23	11	23	4	10
Don't understand the offers	10	9	12	4	16	16	11	4	5	13
Other	*	*	*	0	2	0	1	0	0	0
Don't know	17	24	12	15	16	14	16	17	22	0

Source: Ipsos MORI

Those not accepting help were asked why not. The varied response reflects that there are a range of different reasons people give for not taking up such help. The most common answer is that they don't want it or need it. This is particularly marked among the 65+ age group, electricity PPM users and those in Scotland. More interesting, perhaps, is that 15% believe they would not qualify. This includes 28% of social group ABs, but is also mentioned by a few in social group E, though it has to be noted that a substantial proportion of these do not know what sorts of people would qualify.

There is some scepticism about the actual offers; 15% believe you "don't get something for nothing", rising to 21% among electricity PPM customers. Ten percent concede they don't understand the offers, rising to 16% among social groups D and E. A further 10% give the reason as a lack of trust in the suppliers. Lack of trust in the suppliers is strongest among social group E and those in Wales. The proportion of don't knows is relatively high (17%), and reaches 24% among the 15-34 age group.

Appendices

Sample Profile

Q1a *Do you have mains gas and/or mains electricity in your home?*

	All
<i>Base: All respondents</i>	(2,025) %
Mains gas	84
Mains electricity	92
Neither/Don't know/Refused	5
Either	95

Source: Ipsos MORI

Q1b *Are you responsible or jointly responsible for the gas or electricity bills in your household?*

	All
<i>Base: All with mains gas or electricity</i>	(1,919) %
Yes	83
No	17

Source: Ipsos MORI

Q8 *How do you pay for the gas you use?*

	All
<i>Base: All those with mains gas who are responsible for the bill</i>	(1,398) %
Monthly direct debit	60
Pay quarterly in arrears	20
Prepayment meter	12
Fuel Direct	*
Weekly/fortnightly payment scheme	3
Payment card/book ad hoc	3
Other	1

Source: Ipsos MORI

Q8 *How do you pay for the electricity you use?*

	All
<i>Base: All those with mains electricity who are responsible for the bill</i>	<i>0</i> <i>%</i>
Monthly direct debit	57
Pay quarterly in arrears	21
Prepayment meter	13
Fuel Direct	*
Weekly/fortnightly payment scheme	4
Payment card/book ad hoc	3
Other	1

Source: Ipsos MORI

Demographics

	Weighted	Unweighted
	<i>(2,025)</i> <i>%</i>	<i>(2,025)</i> <i>%</i>
Age		
15-34	32	30
35-64	49	47
65+	20	23
Social Group		
AB	25	20
C1	29	29
C2	21	21
D	16	16
E	9	14
Region		
England	84	80
Wales	7	10
Scotland	9	9

Source: Ipsos MORI

Topline Results

OFGEM Survey – Consumer Awareness of Suppliers’ CSR Initiatives – Ipsos MORI Capibus Weighted Topline Results – 1 February 2007

- This topline shows the final weighted results for a face-to-face survey conducted among 2,025 UK residents by Ipsos MORI between 19th and 25th January 2007.
- Data are weighted by gender, age, social grade, region and working status.
- Where results do not sum to 100, this may be due to multiple responses, computer rounding or the exclusion of don't knows/not stated
- Results are based on all respondents unless otherwise stated
- An asterisk (*) represents a value of less than one half or one percent, but not zero

Q1.a **Do you have mains gas and/or mains electricity in your home?** MULTICODE

	%
Mains gas	84
Mains electricity	92
Neither/Don't know/Refused	5

Q1.b **Are you responsible or jointly responsible for the gas or electricity bills in your household?**

	%
Yes	83
No	17

Base: All those who have mains gas and/or electricity in their home (1,919)

Part One - CSR Awareness

Q2. ASK ALL WITH MAINS GAS OR ELECTRICITY: **The following questions relate to your usage of mains gas or electricity only.**

What would you do first if you were having difficulty paying your supplier for your gas or electricity usage? DO NOT PROMPT. CODE ONE ONLY.

	%
Contact the Citizens Advice Bureau	5
Contact your energy provider	56
Contact Energywatch	1
Stop payment	1
Reduce the amount of energy I use	10
Borrow money	4
Delay payment	1
Try to get other person (eg relative) to pay	4
Contact other advisor (eg social worker, family support organisation etc)	2
Other	3
Don't know	14

Base: All those who have mains gas and/or electricity in their home (1,919)

Q3.a **What kinds of assistance, if any, are you aware of that gas and electricity suppliers offer for customers who have difficulties paying their bills? DO NOT PROMPT.**
MULTICODE OK

	%
Reduced Tariffs (either a specific social tariff or reducing the cost of your tariff without changing your payment method)	12
Money off offers (known as rebates, for example when a supplier gives a one-off winter rebate if you are on a prepayment meter)	7
Funds or grants from suppliers to help you write off debts	5
A check to see that a customer is receiving all the benefits they are entitled to	5
Other	5
Don't know	46
None of these	22

Base: All those who have mains gas and/or electricity in their home (1,919)

Q3.b **SHOWCARD Have you previously seen or been given information about any of these types of help that customers can get from their gas and electricity suppliers? MULTICODE OK**

	%
Reduced Tariffs (either a specific social tariff or reducing the cost of your tariff without changing your payment method)	13
Money off offers (known as rebates, for example when a supplier gives a one-off winter rebate if you are on a prepayment meter)	10
Funds or grants from suppliers to help you write off debts	7
A check to see that a customer is receiving all the benefits they are entitled to	6
Other	*
Don't know	20
None	52

Base: All those who have mains gas and/or electricity in their home (1,919)

Q4. **If you wanted it, how would you obtain information on the help suppliers can offer? DO NOT PROMPT. CODE ONE ANSWER ONLY**

	%
Wait for your supplier to contact you.	4
Contact your supplier for information.	59
Contact a third party for information (eg. Citizen's Advice Bureaux)	8
Search the internet for information	14
Get information from library or guides/booklets	1
Would not want help	2
Other	1
Don't know	12

Base: All those who have mains gas and/or electricity in their home (1,919)

Q5. **Who do you think would qualify for the help suppliers can offer? DO NOT PROMPT.**
MULTICODE OK

	%
People on benefits	39
People on low income	42
People in debt	12
The elderly	48
The disabled or chronically sick	21
Anyone	7
Other	2
Don't know	14

Base: All those who have mains gas and/or electricity in their home (1,919)

Q6. **SHOWCARD In the event that you were having difficulty paying your gas or electricity bill, would you personally accept any of the help set out on this card?**

	%
Yes	81
No	19

Base: All those who have mains gas and/or electricity in their home (1,919)

Q7. **Why wouldn't you accept the help offered? DO NOT PROMPT. MULTICODE OK**

	%
Don't trust suppliers	10
Don't understand the offers	10
Don't want it – too much hassle	11
Don't want it – don't need any help	26
Don't think I would qualify	15
Don't believe you can get something for nothing	15
Other	*
Don't know	17

All those who would not accept the help available if they had difficulties paying their gas or electricity bill (354)

IF RESPONDENT HAS BOTH MAINS GAS AND ELECTRICITY READ OUT: **Please answer the following questions separately for both your Gas and Electricity supply.**

ASK MAIN BILL PAYERS/JOINT BILL PAYER ONLY

Q8. SHOWCARD **How do you pay for the gas/electricity you use?** CODE ONE ONLY FOR GAS AND ELECTRICITY SEPARATELY IF RELEVANT

	GAS (1,398) %	ELECTRICITY (1,545) %
Monthly Direct Debit	60	57
Pay quarterly in arrears	20	21
Prepayment Meter	12	13
Fuel Direct (where a set amount is deducted from your benefits before you receive them)	*	*
Weekly/Fortnightly payment scheme	3	4
Payment card/book that I use whenever I choose (Ad Hoc)	3	3
Other	1	1
Don't know	*	1