

Household Consumer Perceptions of the energy market

Quarter 2 2020
Fieldwork carried out

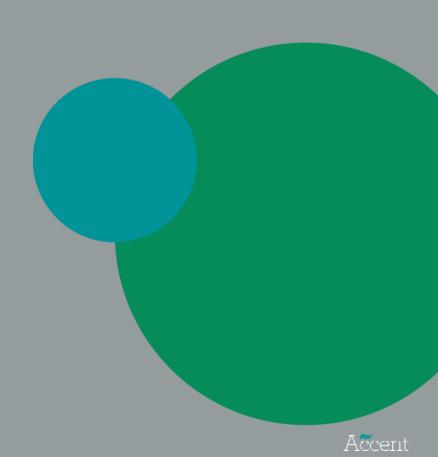
Fieldwork carried out in April 2020





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Changes over time

Changes over time

Fieldwork took place during the Covid-19 lockdown in April 2020

Satisfaction with the dimensions of service

- The proportion of consumers who were satisfied overall with their supplier increased from 73% in Q1 2020 to 77% in Q2, a tracker high.
- In Q2 2020, satisfaction with customer service overall significantly improved to 74% (compared to 71% last quarter).
- Satisfaction with the service received by telephone increased slightly from Q1 (68%) to Q2 2020 (70%), but remained lower compared to levels seen in 2018.

Complaints handling

- Satisfaction with the outcome of a complaint declined significantly over time from 71% in Q4 2018 to 58% in Q2 2020.
- Satisfaction with the time taken to resolve complaints also declined, from 25% in Q4 2019 to 20% in Q2 2020.



Changes over time



Smart meters

Satisfaction with the smart meters generally has been steady over time (67% in Q2 2020), but satisfaction with the installation process declined substantially between Q1 2020 (80%) and Q2 2020 (72%)*.

Consumer engagement

- Q2 2020 saw a decrease in the proportion considering switching supplier (from 21% in Q1 2020 to 18%).
- Price remains the most common reason cited for choosing a supplier (55% mentioned choosing a supplier to get a better tariff in Q2 2020), but offering a green tariff has become much more salient over the duration of the tracker, increasing from 9% in Q4 2018 to 19% in Q2 2020.

Other metrics

- Recall of all types of information received from suppliers increased between Q1 and Q2 2020.
- Recall of the default tariff price cap increased between Q1 2020 and Q2 2020 (from 22% to 27%).



^{*} Many smart meter installations were paused during the Covid-19 lock-down for safety reasons.



Background and method

Background

- This report presents findings from a tracking survey commissioned jointly by Ofgem and Citizens Advice.
 - The Gas and Electricity Markets Authority (GEMA) is the regulator of Britain's gas and electricity markets, and its principal objective is to protect the interests of both current and future consumers. Ofgem carries out the day to day functions of GEMA.
 - Citizens Advice helps millions of people every year to find a way forward, across all sectors, whatever their problems. This informs its role as the statutory energy consumer advocate, fighting for the best outcomes for current and future consumers.
- The tracker is a representative survey of domestic energy bill-payers and provides Ofgem and Citizens Advice with ongoing measures of consumer engagement in and experiences of the energy market.



Methodology

- Data was collected using a mixed-mode survey of 3,053 domestic energy bill-payers in Great Britain (GB). Fieldwork was carried out using:
 - An online survey using a commercial online panel (n = 2,903)
 - CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) survey to replace the usual face-to-face interviews in light of the coronavirus outbreak, and allow for inclusion of the digitally excluded population. CATI participants included those without access to the internet, those who had not used the internet in the previous six months and older groups less likely to use the internet (n=150)
- All participants were responsible (solely or jointly) for the energy bills in their household or for choosing their energy supplier.
- The survey used quotas to achieve a sample representative of the GB bill-payer population. Quotas were set on age, gender, social grade and region. Data were weighted to the known profile of the GB population. Quotas (other than gender) were based on census Household Reference Person (HRP)*, as a proxy for bill-payer.



Fieldwork dates

■ Fieldwork dates for each of the seven waves of the survey completed are indicated below:

Fieldwork	Q4 2018	Q1 2019	Q2 2019	Q3 2019	Q4 2019	Q1 2020	Q2 2020
Online sample	24 th October – 11 th November 2018	29 th January – 6 th February 2019	26 th March - 15 th April 2019	3 rd July - 17 th July 2019	1 st – 23 rd October 2019	6 th - 22 nd January 2020	1 st - 17 th April 2020
Face-to- Face sample*	24 th October – 13 th November 2018	31 st January – 17 th February 2019	1 st – 16 th April 2019	1 st July – 23 rd July 2019	3 rd – 17 th October 2019	9 th - 24 th January 2020	1 st - 24 th April 2020



Confidence levels and margin of error

- As the survey involved sampling a selection, rather than the whole population, of energy consumers, confidence intervals apply to the results. These confidence intervals indicate, for a given sample size and a given survey result, the degree of confidence we can have that the survey result is real and not due to random chance. For the total sample on which these results are based (n=3,053), there is a confidence interval of +/-2% (i.e. a survey result of 50% could lie between 48% and 52%).
- Confidence intervals also apply when comparing results between waves. Where there are statistically significant differences in findings to previous waves (i.e. we have statistical confidence that a real change has occurred), these are indicated. Where only wave seven results are shown, there are no statistically significant differences in findings from previous waves.
- All measures of statistical significance have been tested at the 95% confidence level.



Abbreviations/terms used in this report

Demographics:

- SEG = Socio-Economic grade
- ABC1 = Consumers falling into the top three socio-economic bands
- C2DE = Consumers falling into the bottom three socio-economic bands
- Online = Survey sample sourced from an online consumer panel
- Digitally excluded = Sample sourced from faceto-face in-home interviews. All selected on the basis they have no or limited access to the internet

Tariffs / Payment:

- Fixed = Consumer is on a fixed tariff for their electricity and gas
- SVT = Consumer is on a Standard Variable Tariff for their electricity and gas
- Mixed tariff = on different types of tariff for gas and electricity
- Dual Fuel = Consumer uses the same supplier for electricity and gas
- PPM = Pre-payment Meter

Other:

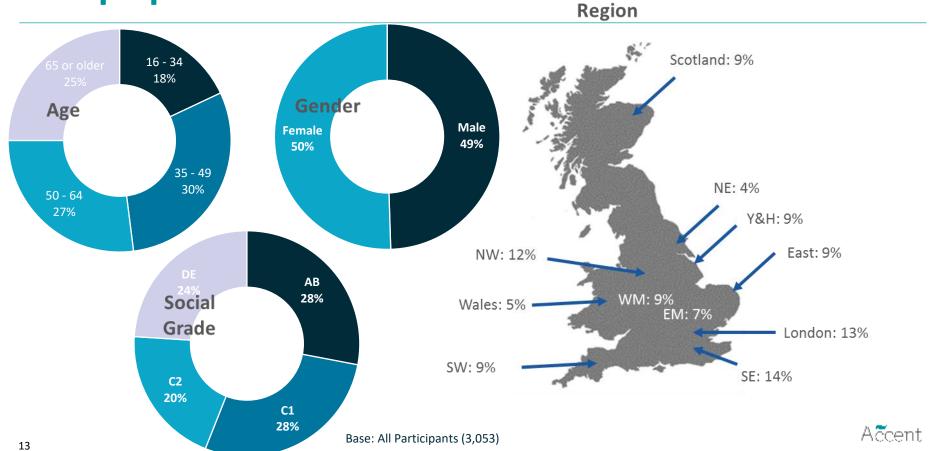
- PCW = Price Comparison Website
- PPS = Percentage points
- Net Satisfaction = % satisfied minus the % dissatisfied





Sample profile

Sample profile

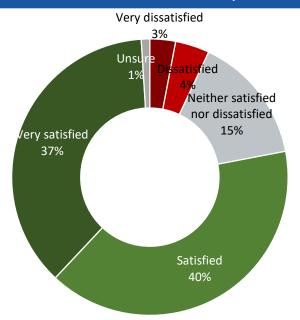




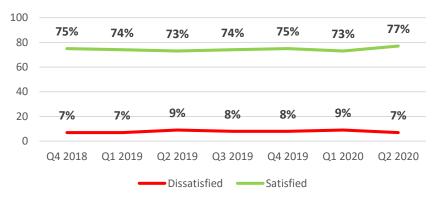
Satisfaction with supplier

Overall satisfaction with supplier

77% are satisfied with their supplier, a significant increase since last quarter (73%). This is the highest satisfaction recorded over the last seven quarters



Overall satisfaction over time

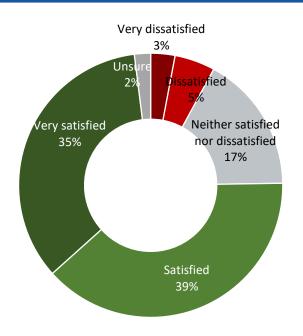


- As with at least the previous four quarters, the following groups of consumers have higher satisfaction:
 - Those who have ever switched supplier (80%) vs never switched (72%)
 - Those aged 65+ (81%) vs aged 50-64 (72%)

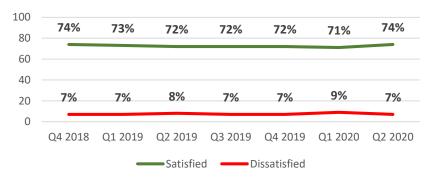


Satisfaction with customer service

74% are satisfied with customer service, a significant increase since last quarter (71%)



Satisfaction with customer service over time



Higher satisfaction among:

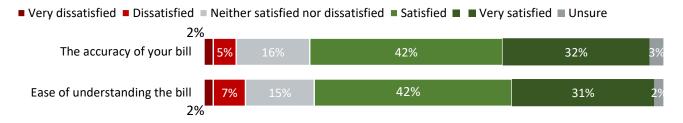
- Customers paying by direct debit (75%) vs standard credit (68%)
- Those with a smart meter (77%) vs those without (72%)
- Those on a fixed tariff (77%) vs SVT (72%)



Overall, how dissatisfied or satisfied are you with the customer service you have received from your energy supplier?

Satisfaction with bill

Around 3 in 4 are satisfied with accuracy and ease of understanding bills



- The % satisfied with ease of understanding is lower among:
 - Those dissatisfied overall with supplier (42%) vs satisfied (84%)
 - Those who have a disability (71%) vs no disability (75%)
 - Those using a PPM (63%) or paying by standard credit (66%) vs direct debit (75%)

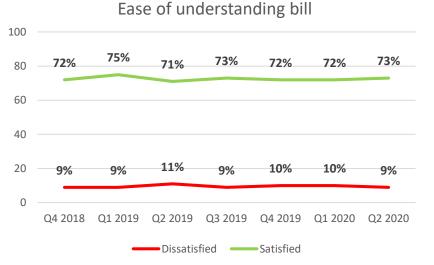
- Each of these groups has had lower satisfaction over all or some of the last 7 quarters:
 - Dissatisfied overall with supplier (all 7 quarters)
 - Have a disability (all but Q1 2019)



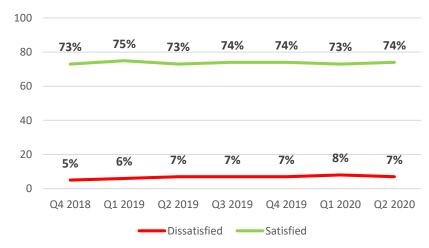
Satisfaction with bill over time



Satisfaction with billing has been consistent over the duration of the tracker



The accuracy of your bill

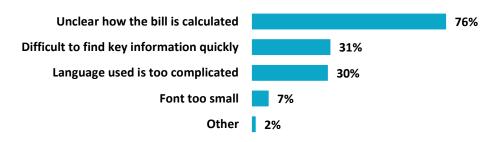


Please can you tell me how dissatisfied or satisfied you are with the following aspects of your energy supplier's bills?



Reasons for dissatisfaction with ease of understanding the bill

In line with previous quarters, clarity of calculation of bill continues to be the most common problem



Reason for dissatisfaction	Groups more likely to experience this problem			
Difficult to find key information quickly	 Those digitally included (33%) vs those digitally excluded (7%) Those aged 16-34 (51%) vs those aged 35-49 (21%) and 65+ (25%) 			

There were no statistically significant variations by sub-groups for other reasons for dissatisfaction with understanding of bills.



Recent contact with supplier (in the last 3 months)

28% tried to contact their supplier in the last three months.



The proportion who have tried, but been unable to contact their supplier is also consistent with previous tracking waves.

- Those most likely to contact their supplier are:
 - Dissatisfied customers (41%) vs satisfied (28%)
 - Those aged 16-34 (31%) vs aged 50-64 (24%)
 - Those with a disability (33%) vs those without (26%)
 - Those who ever switched supplier (31%) and tariff (32%) vs never switched (23%)

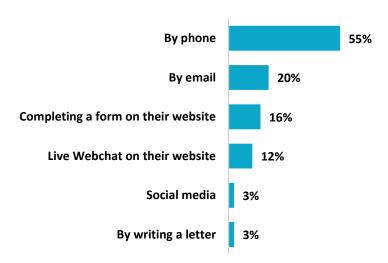


Recent contact with supplier: contact channel used



Telephone continues to be the main contact method used

Contact method



How did you (try to) make contact with your energy supplier on that last occasion? (%) Base: All who contacted or have tried to make contact in the last 3 months (994)

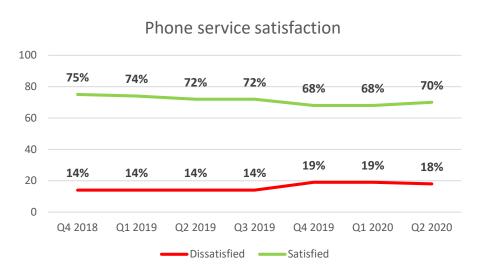
Using the phone was the most common method of contact for all demographics, however some groups were more likely to favour other forms of contact.

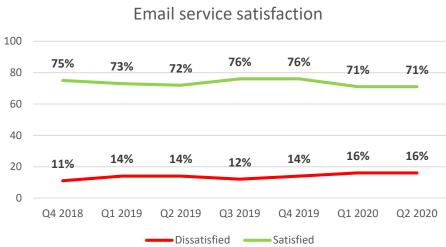
- Aged 16-34 were more likely to use live webchat (17%) vs 6% aged 65+.
- Those aged 65+ were the age group most likely to use a website form (24%)
- Lower SEG more likely to use phone (58% C2DE % vs 52% ABC1) and less likely to use form on website (13% vs 18%)
- 80% of digitally excluded used phone



Satisfaction with phone and email service

Satisfaction with phone service marginally improved between Q1 and Q2 2020; while email service was steady over the same time. Over the longer term satisfaction with phone service has significantly declined.





Please can you tell me how dissatisfied or satisfied you were with the service received by phone? (%)

Base: All who contacted or tried to contact their supplier by phone in the last 3 months (n=994 in Q2 2020)

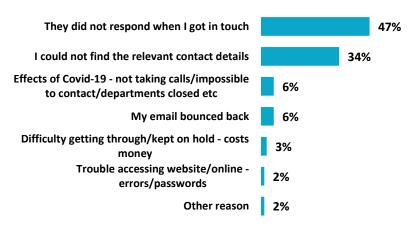
Please can you tell me how dissatisfied or satisfied you were with the service received by email? (%)

Base: All who contacted or tried to contact their supplier by email in the last 3 months (n=190 in Q2 2020)



Reasons customers are unable to contact suppliers

Main reasons for being unable to contact supplier



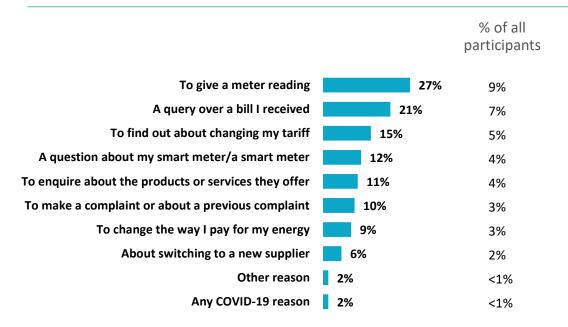
Over time, there has been little change in the reasons cited for being unable to reach suppliers.

Thinking of the last time you tried to make contact with your energy supplier, why were you not able to? (%)





Reasons for last contacting supplier



^{*} Contact relating to smart meters will include all forms of contact (e.g. installations, ongoing use, changing smart meter etc)

Thinking of the last time you (made/tried to make) contact with your energy supplier, what was it about? (%)

Base: Those who contacted / tried to contact their energy supplier (994)

Differences by subgroup (among those who contacted):

- 37% without a Smart Meter gave a meter reading
- 38% of those aged 65+ got in contact about a meter reading
- 31% on standard credit got in contact about a bill query
- 30% of those aged 16-34 got in contact about a bill query
- 30% who switched tariff in last 12 months contacted to find out about changing tariff
- 21% with a Smart Meter asked a question about it
- 15% of those aged 16-34 got in contact about a complaint
- 14% of those using standard credit got in contact to change payment methods



Reasons for contacting supplier varies by payment Reasons customers are unable to contact suppliers method (Q2 2020)

	Any using standard credit	Any using PPM	Any using Direct debit	
A query over a bill I received	31%	16%	21%	
A question about my smart meter/a smart meter	15%	16%	9%	
To change the way I pay for my energy	14%	12%	7%	
About switching to a new supplier	14%	7%	5%	
To enquire about the products or services they offer	15%	14%	11%	
To find out about changing my tariff	15%	10%	17%	
To give a meter reading	23%	12%	32%	
To make a complaint or about a previous complaint	14%	15%	8%	
Other reason	1%	3%	1%	
Emergency credit/funds - during Covid-19 isolation	0%	5%	0%	
Covid-19 issues - request for support/advice etc	0%	2%	0%	
Any COVID-19 reason	0%	6%	1%	

More of those paying by **standard credit** contacted their supplier about:

- A bill query
- to change payment method
- To switch supplier
- To give a meter reading
- About a complaint

Those paying by **PPM** were more likely to contact about:

- A smart meter
- A complaint
- Covid-19 and emergency payments

Those paying by **direct debit** were more likely to contact about:

- Changing tariff
 - A meter reading



²⁵ *Highlighted percentages are statistically significantly different from other payment categories



Complaints

Complaints to suppliers

10% of recent contacts with suppliers were relating to a complaint

- This equates to 3% of all consumers complaining the last time they contacted their supplier
- The groups more likely to have complained were:
 - Dissatisfied overall with their supplier (30%) vs satisfied
 (5%) or neutral (17%)
 - Those paying by standard credit (14%) and PPM (15%) vs direct debit (8%)
 - Younger consumers: 16-34 (15%)
 - Those with a smart meter (12%) vs those without (8%)
 - Those with a disability (15%) vs those without (7%)

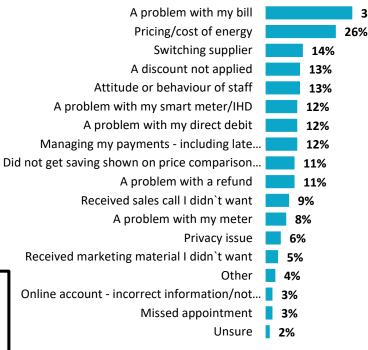
An increase in consumers complaining about switching suppliers:

Q2 2020 14% vs Q1 2020 4%

Fewer complaints about missed appointments

• Q2 2020 3% vs Q4 2019 11%

Reason for complaints (%)

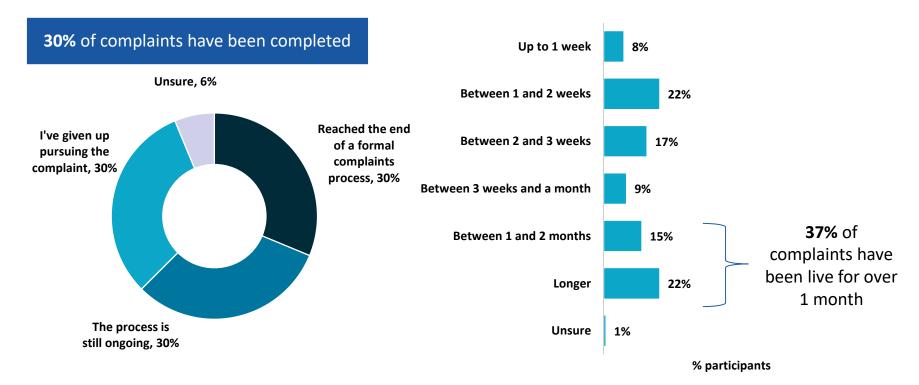


Base: Those who contacted their energy supplier to make a complaint (96)



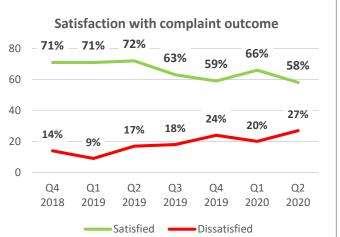
Stage of complaint and time taken to process

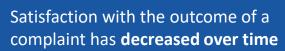
(among those who complained in the past 3 months)





Satisfaction with the complaints process







Satisfaction with the handling of complaints has decreased over the last quarter



Satisfaction with the time taken to deal with complaints appears to have **decreased**

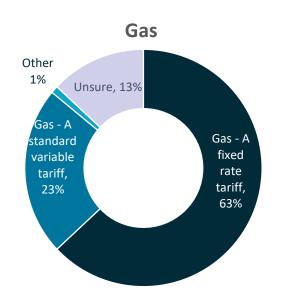


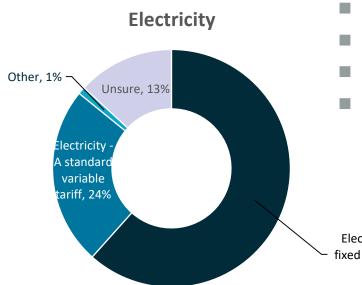


Tariffs and information provision

Tariff type

87% of gas and electricity customers know what tariff type they are on





Those who are unsure are most likely to be:

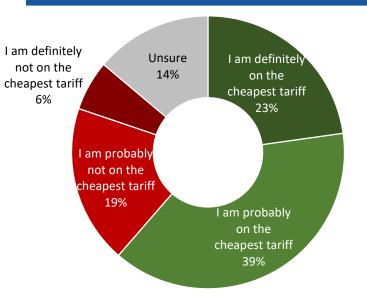
- Pay by PPM
- Never switched supplier
- Digitally excluded
- Have a disability
- Lower social grades

Electricity - A fixed rate tariff, 61%



Do consumers think they're on their supplier's cheapest tariff?

62% believe they are on their supplier's cheapest tariff



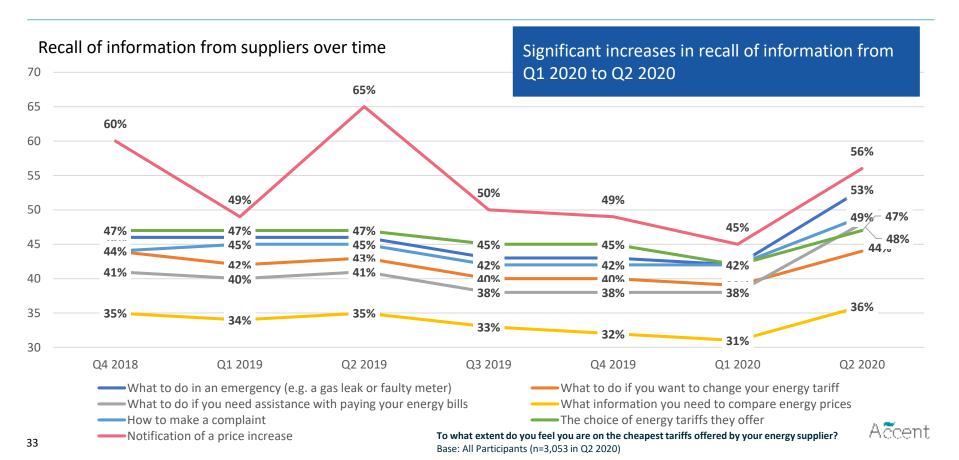
Consumers more likely to believe they're on the cheapest tariff:

- Those who switched supplier in last 12 months (81%)
- Ever switched supplier (72%)
- Fixed tariff (74%)
- Aware of price cap (74%)
- Satisfied with supplier (68%)
- Direct Debit (69%)
- Aged 65+ (71%)
- Dual Fuel (65%)
- Offline consumers (68%)

To what extent do you feel you are on the cheapest tariffs offered by your energy supplier?

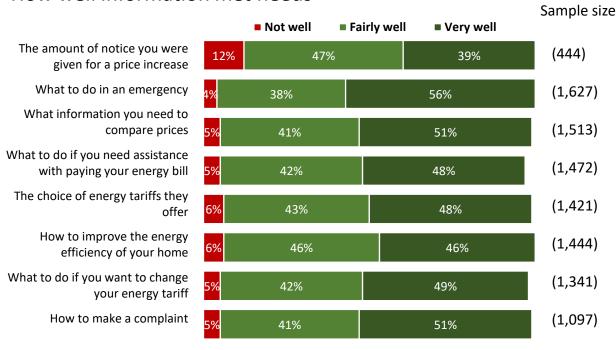


Recall of information received from suppliers



How well information meets consumers' needs

How well information met needs



Almost all consumers recalling information from their supplier felt it met their needs. This trend has been consistent over time.





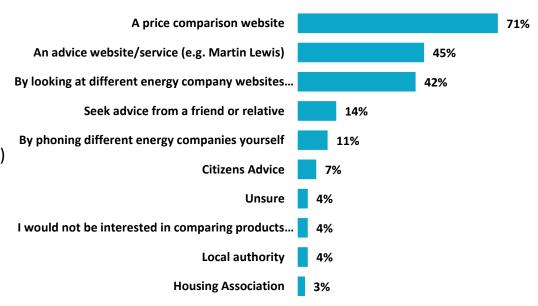
Switching

Information consumers would use to compare suppliers

7 in 10 (**71%**) would use a price comparison website (PCW) to compare suppliers

Consumers more likely to use a PCW:

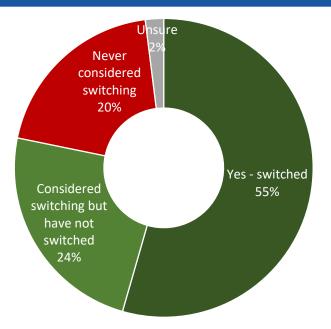
- Those who have ever switched supplier (80%)
- SEG ABC1 (74%)
- Aged 50-64 (77%)
- No disability (75%)
- Pay by direct debit (76%)
- Online consumers (74%)



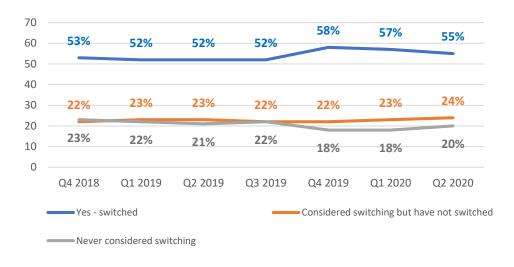


Supplier switching rates

Rates of switching are similar to the previous quarter – **55**% have ever switched supplier



% who have ever switched supplier over time



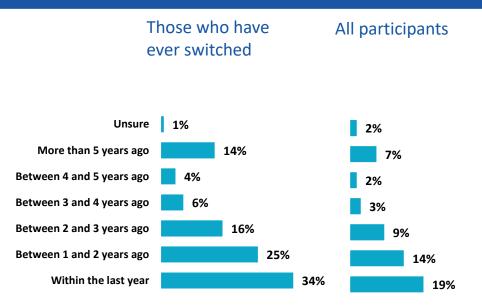


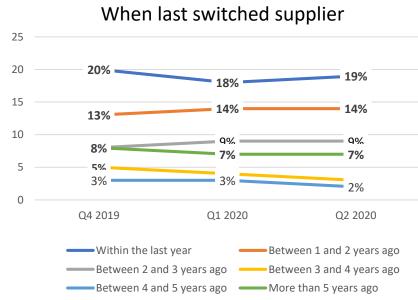
Have you ever switched or considered switching energy supplier? Base: All Participants (3,053)

When was the last time consumers switched supplier?

34% of those who have *ever* switched supplier did so in the last year

This equates to 19% of all consumers switching in the last year









Base: Those who have ever switched (1,646); all Participants (3,053)

Reasons for choosing supplier

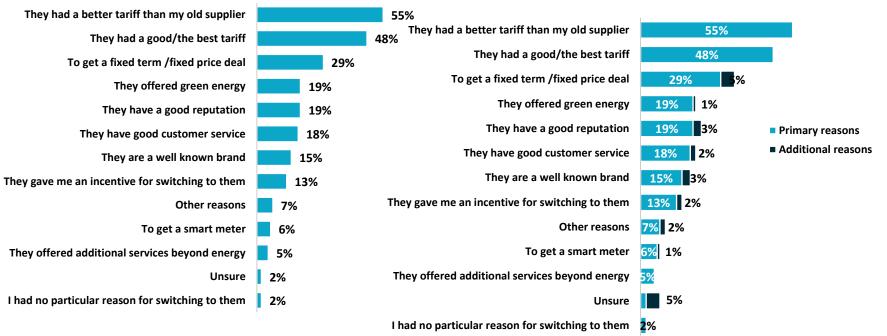
The key reasons for selecting a supplier are cost related

Once you had made the decision to switch to another energy supplier,

what were the main reasons you chose the company you went with?

Base: Those who have ever switched (1,646)

Even when prompting with non-cost reasons, service, reputation, incentives and green tariffs are secondary considerations

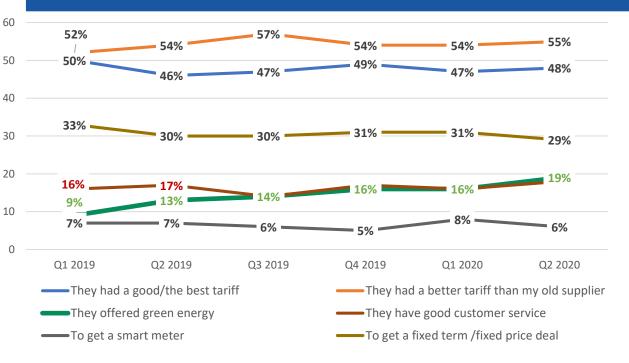




Were there any other reasons for selecting them apart from the tariff?

Reasons for choosing supplier over time

The key reasons for selecting a supplier are cost related, but offering green energy is becoming more salient



This chart shows only reasons which have seen a statistically significant change over time. All other reasons for selecting suppliers have remained consistent over time.

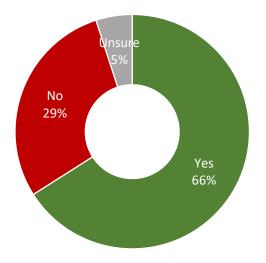
Offering green energy has gradually become a stronger driver of choice of supplier, rising from 9% to 19%.

There has been a slight decrease in people choosing a supplier to get a fixed term/fixed price deal.



Use of Price Comparison Websites (PCWs)

66% who switched used a Price Comparison Website

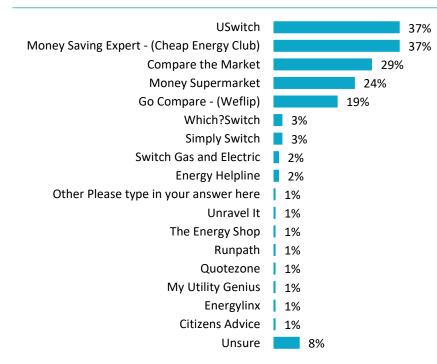


The proportion using PCWs is lowest among:

- The digitally excluded (24%)
- Those paying by PPM (41%) or standard credit (55%)
- Aged 65+ (57%)
- Social grades C2DE (58%)
- Those with a disability (58%)
- Those with a Smart Meter (60%)

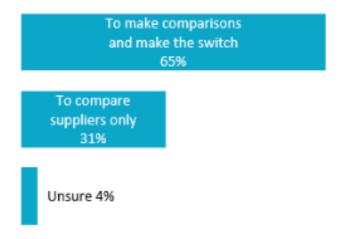


Which PCWs are used?



Which price comparison websites did you use? (%)
Base: All who used price comparison website (1,073)

65% of those using PCWs used them to make the switch



Did you use the price comparison website only to compare suppliers or did you also use it to make the switch?

Base: Those who used a price comparison website to help them switch energy supplier (1,073)



Satisfaction with the switching experience

High satisfaction with the switching process (results have been steady over time)

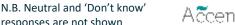


- Those paying by direct debit are more satisfied (85% with ease of comparing suppliers and 89% the process overall)
- Those with a disability tend to he less satisfied

Satisfaction with switching is higher for those who used a PCW

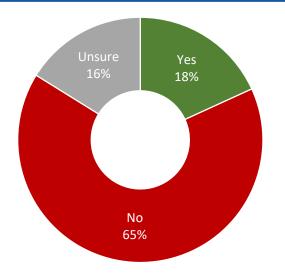
	Satisfied with ease of comparing suppliers and prices	Satisfied with the switching process overall
Did not use PCW	66%	79%
Used PCW only to compare suppliers	86%	87%
Used PCW to complete switch	96%	94%

Please can you tell me how dissatisfied or satisfied you were with the following aspects of your switch to another supplier?

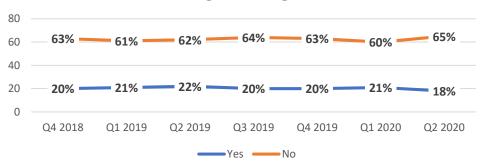


How many consumers are currently considering switching

In Q2 2020 **18%** were thinking of switching supplier - significantly fewer than the previous quarter (21%)



Considering switching over time



- The proportion considering switching is highest for:
 - Dissatisfied customers (54%)
 - Paying via standard credit (27%)
 - Online (19%) vs digitally excluded (12%)

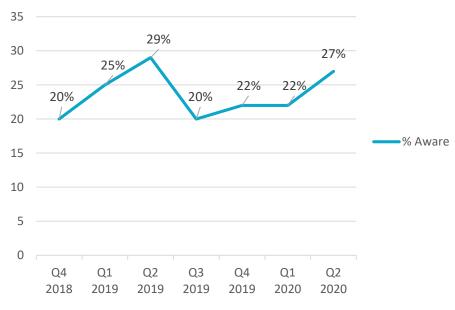




The energy price cap

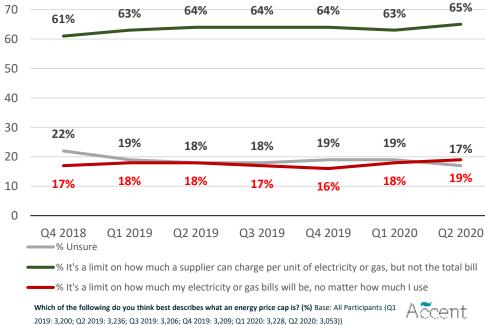
Awareness of the price cap

There has been a continued increase in awareness over the past year



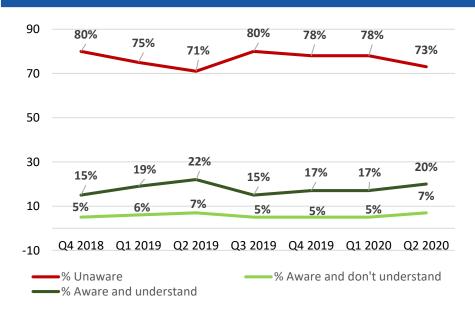
Before today, had you heard about an energy price cap known as a `Default Tariff Cap'? (%) Base: All Participants (Q4 2018: 3,300; Q1 2019: 3,200; Q2 2019: 3,236; Q3 2019: 3,206; Q4 2019: 3,209; Q1 2020: 3,228, Q2 2020: 3,053)

Understanding of the principle of the cap has remained similar compared to the previous quarters



Informed awareness of the price cap

20% have heard of the cap and understand it, an increase from the previous three quarters



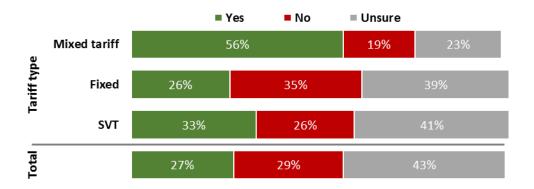
Higher awareness among following consumers:

- Ever switched tariff (26%) vs (12%) never switched
- Aged 50-64 (22%) and aged 65 and over (24%) vs aged 16-34 (15%)
- Those using direct debit (22%)
- ABC1 (22%)



Perceived relevance of cap

27% feel the cap could apply to them

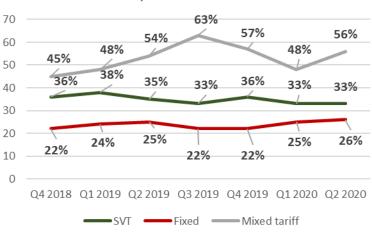


Deemed most relevant by:

- Younger consumers: Aged 16-34 (37%)
- Those with a smart meter (32%)

Perceived relevance by tariff type over time







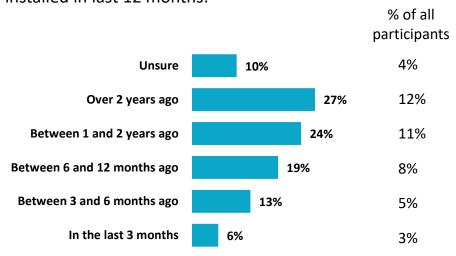


Smart meters

Smart meter use

43% have a Smart Meter

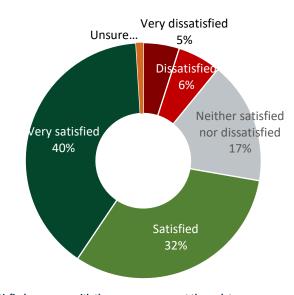
38% of consumers with a smart meter said they were installed in last 12 months:



Of the two meters described below, which is the most similar to the one in your home? / When did you have your smart meter installed? (%)

Base: All Participants (3,053) / All with smart meter (1,346)

7 in 10 are satisfied with the installation process

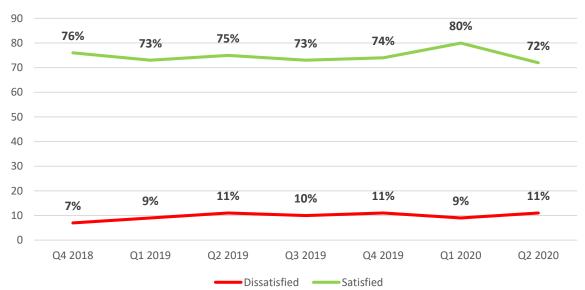


How dissatisfied or satisfied were you with the process you went through to have a smart meter installed? Base: All with smart meter installed in last 6 months (249)



Satisfaction with smart meter installation over time





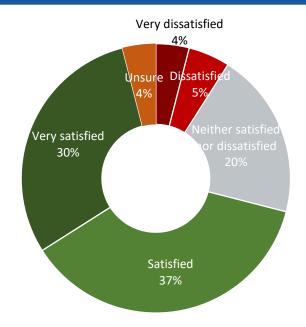
There was a statistically significant decline in satisfaction of the smart meter installation process from Q1 2020 (80%) to Q2 2020 (72%)*



How dissatisfied or satisfied were you with the process you went through to have a smart meter installed? Base: All with smart meter installed in last 6 months (249)

Satisfaction with smart meter is steady

67% are satisfied with their smart meter overall. Since Q4 2018 this has remained consistent, between 64% and 67%







Annexes

Measuring smart meter use

- Use of smart meters was measured by asking participants to indicate which of the following best described the energy meters they have in their home.
- The question was asked separately of gas and electricity. The order of the meter descriptions was randomised across the survey sample.
- Those selecting the description for Meter A (the titles remained static) for either gas or electricity were deemed to have a smart meter.

Meter A	Meter B
Monitors energy use	Monitors energy use
Automatically sends readings of how much energy has	You or someone else in your household personally send
been used in your home to your supplier	readings of how much energy has been used in your home
	to your supplier OR someone from your supplier visits
	your home to take meter readings
Shows how much energy has been used in pounds and	<u>Does not</u> show how much energy has been used in pounds
pence on a display or an app or online account	and pence on a display or an app or online account
Has been installed in the last 5 years	Has been installed more than 5 years ago
SHOW IF HAVE A PRE-PAYMENT METER Allow those who pre-	SHOW IF HAVE A PRE-PAYMENT METER Those who pre-pay
pay for energy to top up via their mobile or online	for energy must top up at a pay point, post office or other
	shop



Sample profile: unweighted vs weighted

Demogra	ohic characteristic	Unweighted	Weighted
Gender	Male	47%	49%
	Female	53%	50%
Age	16-34	23%	18%
	35-49	26%	30%
	50-64	25%	27%
	65+	26%	25%
Social grade	AB	27%	28%
	C1	27%	28%
	C2	21%	20%
	DE	25%	24%

Demographic characteristic		Unweighted	Weighted
Region	East	9%	9%
	East Midlands	7%	7%
	London	12%	13%
	North East	5%	4%
	North West	12%	12%
	Scotland	9%	9%
	South East	13%	14%
	South West	9%	9%
	Wales	5%	5%
	West Midlands	9%	9%
	Yorkshire & Humber	9%	9%



