

Additional energy bill support remains number one priority for public, as Ofgem set to announce lower price cap

Additional support to help families cope with sky-high energy bills is the most popular intervention the government could make to help with the cost of living crisis, according to new polling.

The research, conducted by YouGov, found that 61% of respondents chose energy bill support as one of the interventions they would most like to see- the highest score for any policy option and up from 58% when the question was last asked in July last year, suggesting that support for this intervention may still be rising.

Energy bill support was more than twice as popular as cuts to taxes on wages (29%) and was actually more popular among Conservative voters than among the general population (70% vs 61%).

The research was commissioned by the Stop the Squeeze coalition, a group of 50 civil society organisations, trade unions, and grassroots groups who are calling on the government to tackle the cost of living crisis by boosting incomes, raising taxes on wealth and guaranteeing that the essentials of life remain affordable for everyone.

According to Stop the Squeeze, the growing desire for energy bill support demonstrates the significant public appetite for bolder government action on the cost of living crisis in the forthcoming Budget, and a small fall in the price cap is not going to be enough to satisfy the public.

The campaign has been arguing for “structural reform” of the energy market in order to guarantee affordable, clean energy for all. Longer term options include greater investment in the construction of cheaper renewables and home insulation, setting up a publicly owned renewable generator, and taking energy network and retail companies back into public ownership to help control prices. In the short term the government could introduce new energy pricing structures that keep bills lower for those on lower incomes.

Instead, the Government is ending both the Energy Price Guarantee and the Household Support Fund on 31 March 2024. These two schemes currently protect households from fluctuating global energy markets and provide local authorities with additional resources to help communities most hit by high energy bills.

The New Economics Foundation, a member of the Stop the Squeeze coalition, has proposed [a National Energy Guarantee](#) to protect those on low incomes.

Simon Francis, coordinator of the End Fuel Poverty Coalition, commented:

“Even if Ofgem drops the energy price cap slightly as expected on Friday, energy prices will still be around 50% higher than they were before the energy bills crisis began.

“This means that since the start of the energy crisis, the average household has spent £2,300 more on energy bills than they would have done had prices remained stable.

“These vast sums are placing an unbearable strain on household finances up and down the country and spending on other goods is down, forcing Britain into recession. Household energy debt is at record levels, millions of people are living in cold damp homes and children are suffering in mouldy conditions.

“Everybody can see what is happening in Britain's broken energy system and it is time for politicians to unite to take long term measures to end fuel poverty as well as provide the short-term financial support households still need.”

Megan Davies from Stop the Squeeze said:

“The fact that the public appetite for energy bill support is rising, not falling, should be a wake up call to the government that the cost of living crisis is far from over.

“Any fall in the price cap is of course welcome, but it is no substitute for the structural reforms to the energy market that are needed to guarantee affordable clean power into the future.

“This Budget could be the government’s last opportunity before the election to listen to the public and show they are serious about taking action on energy bills”.

Dr Alex Chapman, Senior Economist at the New Economics Foundation said:

“The only way to protect communities from current and future energy price spikes and the threat of energy poverty is to fundamentally change our energy retail market.

“We need a system which guarantees the essential energy needs of households. NEF’s National Energy Guarantee does this by putting a protective ring around essential energy use and cutting its cost. At the same time, a premium is placed on excessive consumption which will help give the right incentives to accelerate the green transition.

“The large majority of households would see their bills reduce from this measure, especially those on lower incomes. Models like our National Energy Guarantee are already operated in more than 50 countries around the world, and are tried and tested ways of delivering affordable energy, and a safety net, for all.”

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Contact:

Tom Railton, Director of Advocacy and Campaigns at the Economic Change Unit ,
07890837285, tom@econchange.org

Megan Davies, Policy and Programme Lead at the Economic Change Unit, 07446259386,
megan@econchange.org

Notes to editors:

1. Stop the Squeeze is a coalition campaign of 50 civil society organisations, trade unions, and grassroots groups who are calling on the government to tackle the cost of living crisis by boosting incomes, raising taxes on wealth and guaranteeing that the essentials of life remain affordable for everyone. The full list of supporting organisations can be found at www.stopthesqueeze.uk

Supporter organisations have signed up to support the campaign launch statement and the demands of the campaign, they do not necessarily support every policy proposal that may be mentioned by the campaign.

Stop the Squeeze has been formed by a core steering group consisting of [The Economic Change Unit](#), the [New Economics Foundation](#), and [Tax Justice UK](#).

A range of spokespeople are available from organisations supporting Stop the Squeeze.

2. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2,186 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 15th - 16th February 2024. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).