Electricity Code survey

FINAL REPORT

1 August 2022

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Background

Introduced in October 2021, the ACT Retail Electricity (Transparency and Comparability) Code includes several requirements for electricity retailers to provide information which assists customers choose the best plan available to them.

In order to gauge early awareness and impact of the Code and explore other factors influencing consumer decisions when it comes to household energy plans, a survey with the YourSay Panel was undertaken.

Methodological notes:

- All YourSay Panel members were invited to participate (n=5,991)
- The methodology is biased towards those with internet and computer literacy
- The results have been weighted to reflect relative population proportions based on the ABS Census
- Significance test applied at 95% confidence level
- In single choice questions, results may not add up to 100% due to rounding

How many?

1,562

Who?

Panel members 16+

When?

24 – 30 May 2021

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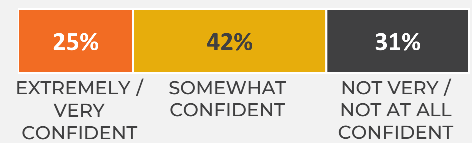
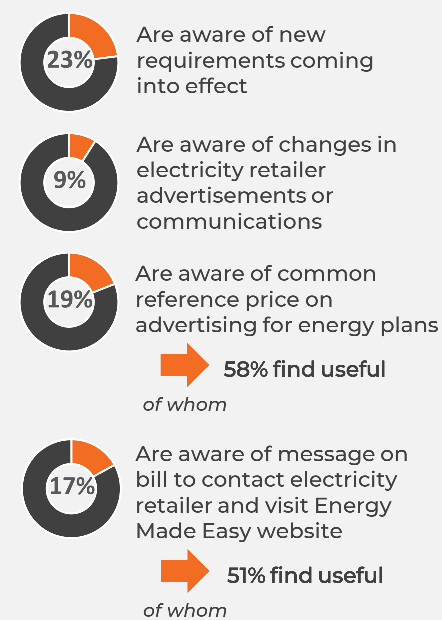
Key findings

- Price is by far the biggest factor respondents take into account when choosing an energy plan (83%)
- Around two-thirds of respondents (67%) express some confidence that they are on the best electricity plan for their circumstances, a figure which has increased when compared with a 2019 survey (53%)
- Approaching one quarter of respondents (23%) say that they are aware of new requirements coming into effect with the introduction of the Electricity Code
- Awareness of these changes increases with age and is more common among men, homeowners and / or those with rooftop solar in the household
- A majority of respondents aware of changes have found these useful – 58% in relation to the common reference price and 51% regarding the message on bills
- Overall, the message on bills has been observed by and prompted almost one in ten respondents to contact their retailer and / or visit the Energy Made Easy website, with 3% going on to change their plan as a result

Confidence on best plan



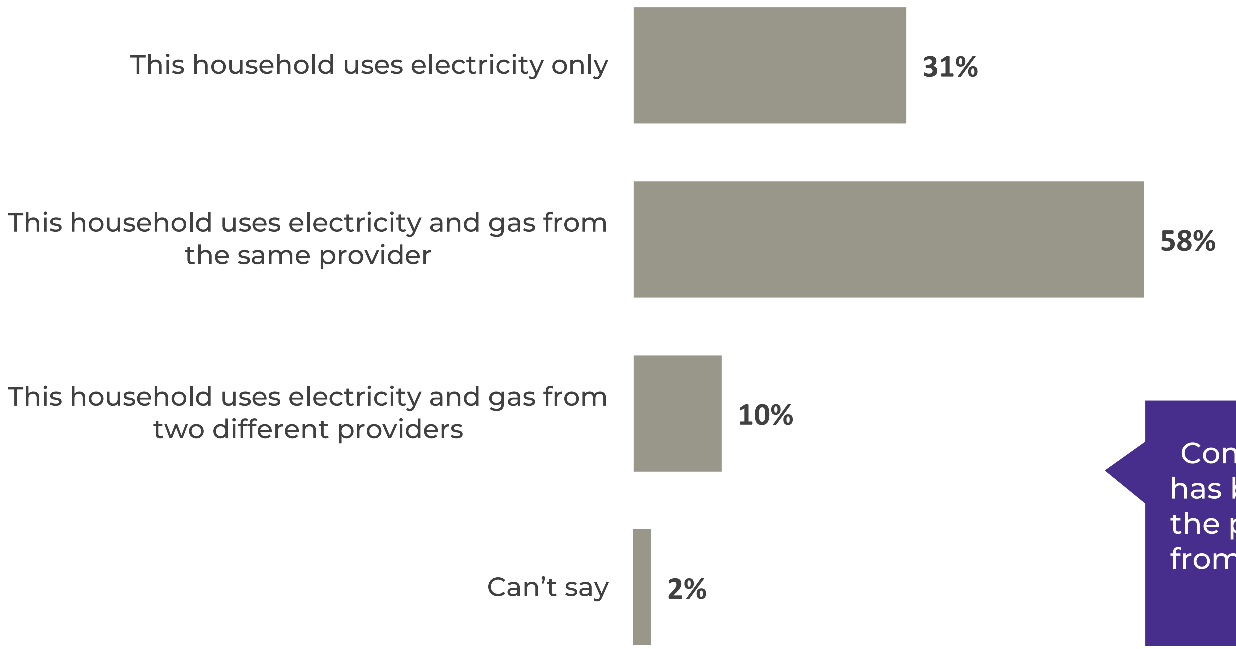
Awareness of Code



Current approaches to household energy plans

Three out of ten currently have electricity only, most of the remainder using gas and electricity from the same provider

Q. Which of the following best applies to your household's energy use?

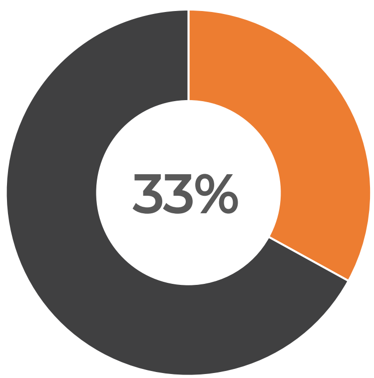


Compared with 2019, there has been a slight increase in the proportion using energy from two different providers (from 6% to 10%)

n=1562

One third of respondents have rooftop solar with this more common among more affluent and older residents

Q. And do you have rooftop solar in your home?



Have household solar

This figure largely corresponds with previous times this was measured on the YourSay Panel

Presence of rooftop solar:

- Increases with age, and is highest among empty nesters (55%)
- Is highest among those who own their home outright (53%)
- Is more prevalent among those on higher incomes (49% for those with $160K+)
- Is significantly higher in Weston Creek and the Molonglo Valley (48%)

n=1562

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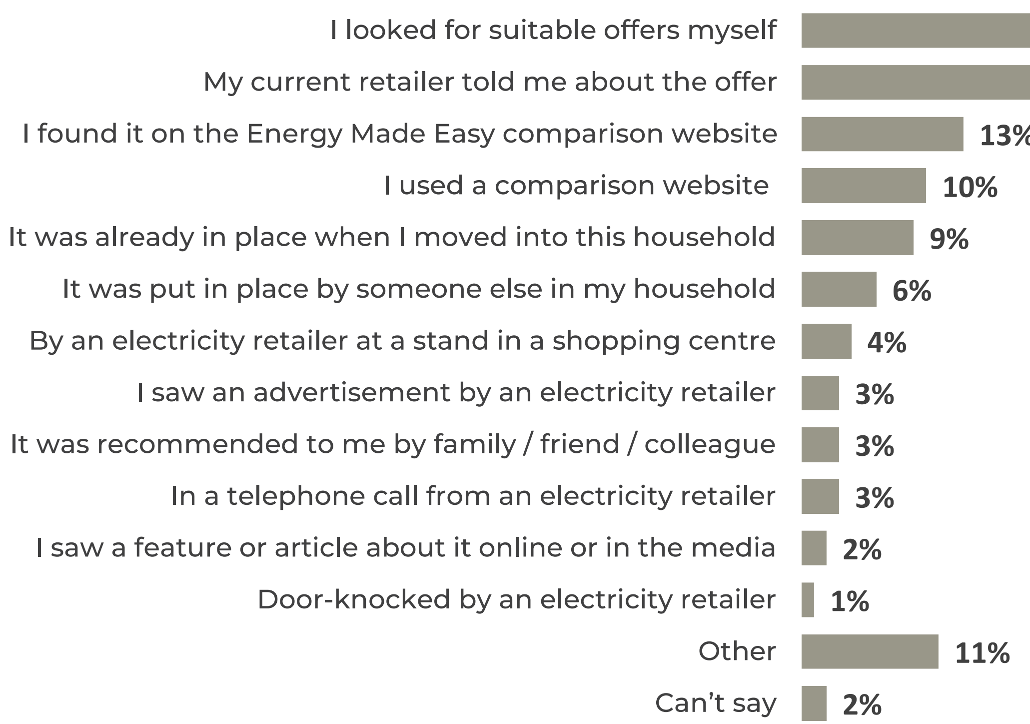
There is a mixture of active and passive adoption of plans, with younger respondents tending to be more active

Q. How did you find out about your current electricity plan?



16-34	35-54	55+
48%	36%	28%
18%	24%	33%

Younger appear more active, older more passive

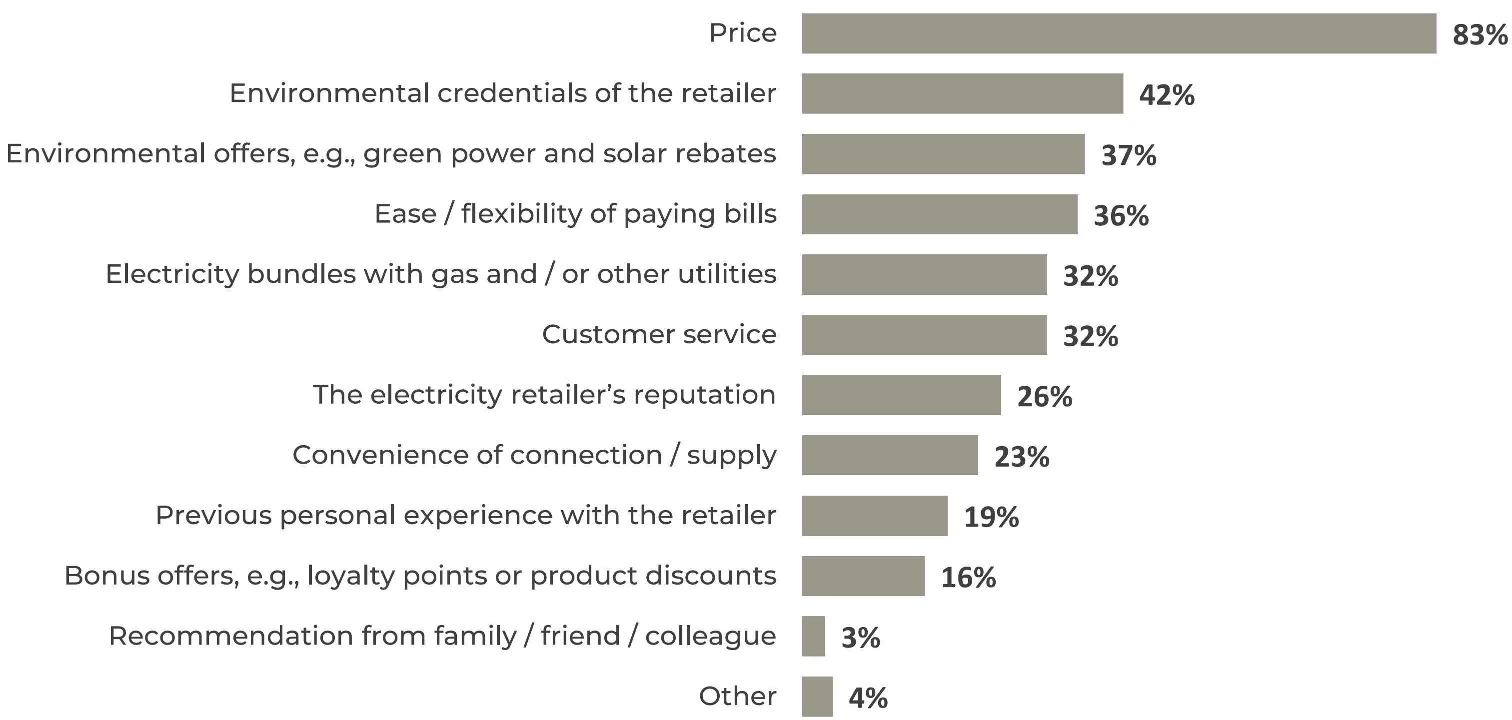
Others include:

- Been with them for years
- No choice / alternative suppliers for my property
- Came about with solar install
- Used Greenpeace review / guide

n=1515

Price is by far the most important factor when choosing an electricity plan

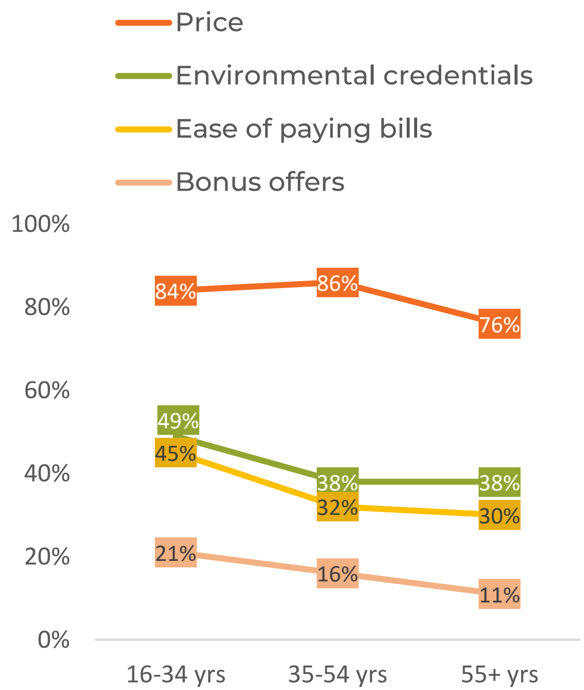
Q. Which of the following are most important to you when choosing an electricity plan?



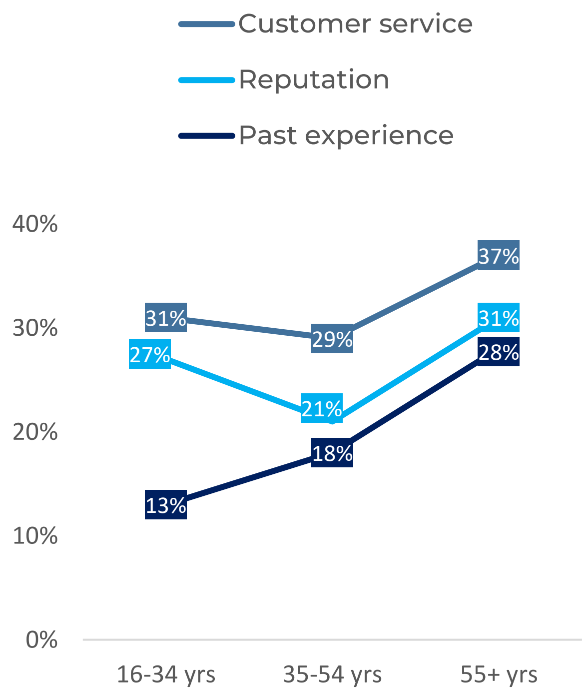
n=1512

What's important for different members of the community when choosing a plan?

Younger respondents more likely to emphasise...



Older respondents more likely to emphasise...

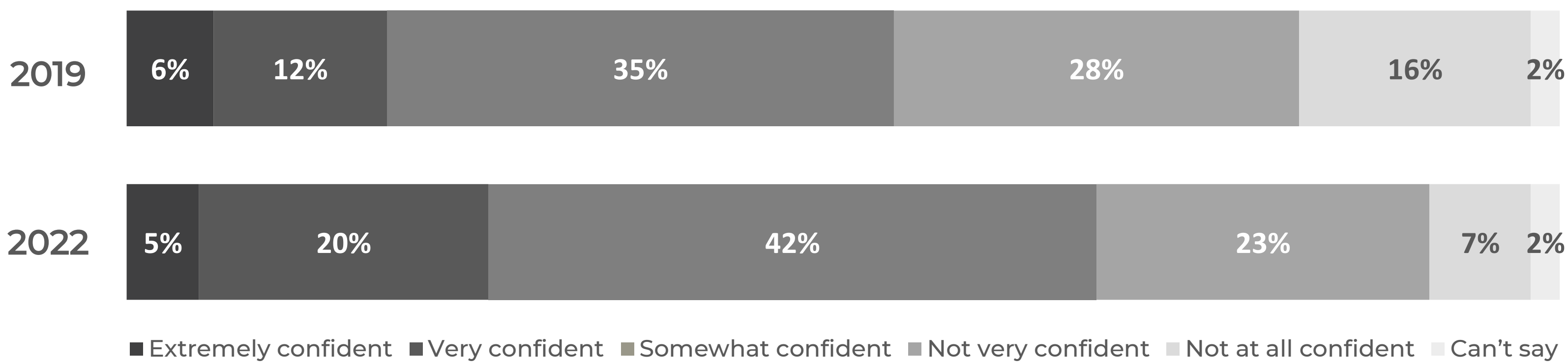


In addition, bundles for electricity and gas are more important for those sourcing energy from the same retailer – 49% of this cohort say bundles are important to them when choosing a plan

n=1512

Confidence in being on the best plan for circumstances has increased since 2019, though three out of ten remain unsure

Q. Overall, how confident are you that you are on the best electricity plan for your circumstances?



There are very few significant differences in confidence across different sections of the community

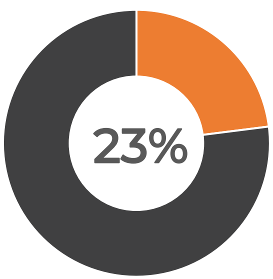
However, those who are active in seeking a plan (i.e. look this up, use comparison websites etc) are more likely to be confident than those more passive in this process

n=1512

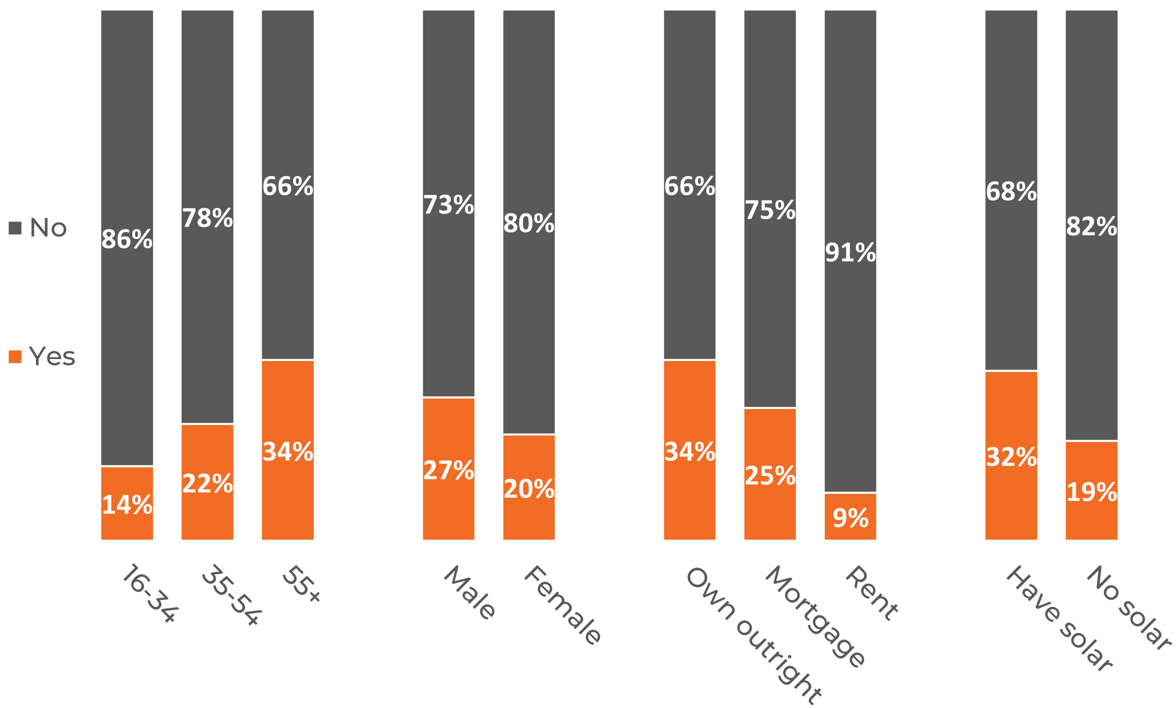
Awareness and response to Electricity Code

Almost one quarter are aware of some changes coming into effect following the introduction of the Code

Q. Before today, were you aware of these new requirements?

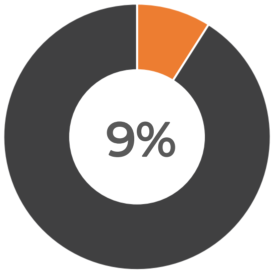


Are aware of **new requirements** coming into effect

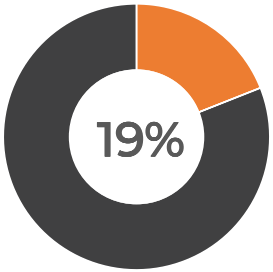


n=1512

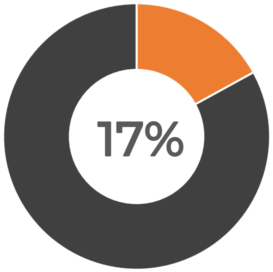
Awareness of specific aspects are not widespread, with two out of ten aware of common reference price



Are aware of changes in **electricity retailer advertisements** or communications



Are aware of **common reference price** on advertising for energy plans



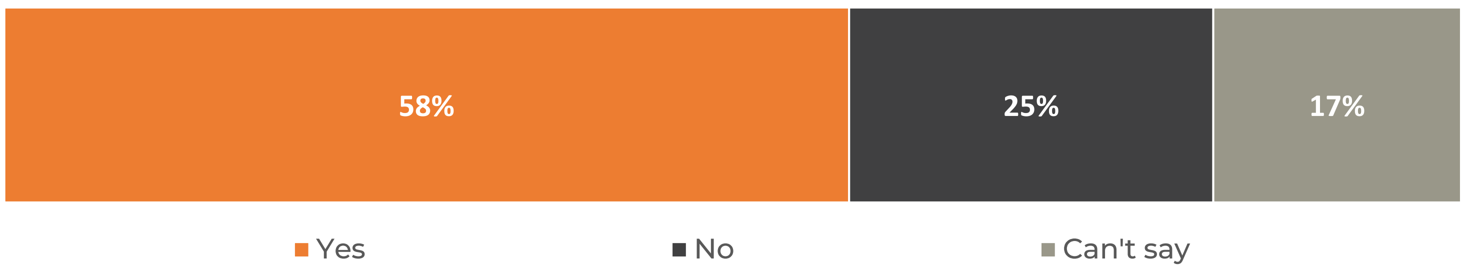
Are aware of **message on bill** to contact electricity retailer and refer to Energy Made Easy website

There were very few variations across different sections of the community in levels of awareness of the different aspects introduced

n=1512

Reference price comparison:
The majority of those aware of this believe it is useful

All aware of common reference price comparison
Q. Have you found this comparison useful?



Why useful?

- Makes comparisons easier
- Gives me confidence / surety I'm getting a fair deal
- Sets expectations about costs
- Saves time – not having to look around
- Provides choice / competitions

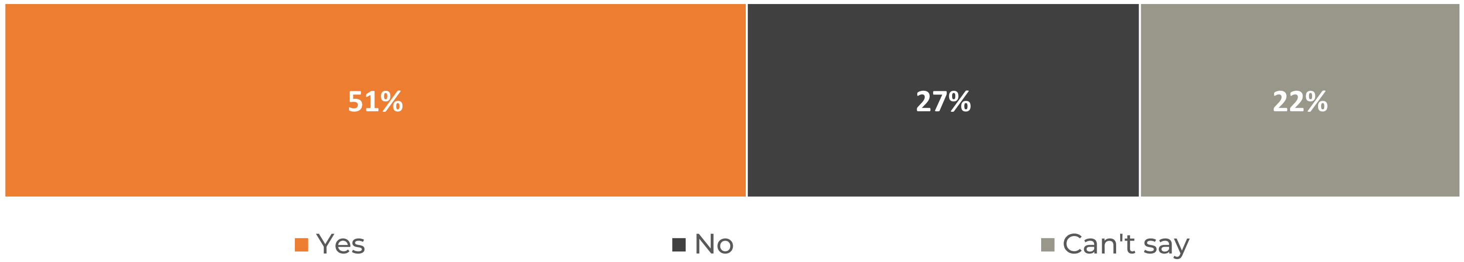
Why not useful?

- Still complex / difficult to make comparisons
- Hard to tailor to our situation
- Reference price seems high – retailers just undercut / use as a sales gimmick
- Adds more small print

All who recall seeing comparison to a common reference price n=283

Message on bill to contact retailer / visit website: Around half who recalled this message found it useful

All aware of message on bill to call retailer / visit Energy Made Easy website
Q. Have you found this information useful?



Why useful?

- Prompts me to check current plan
- Shows there are more / different options out there
- Changed plan / got a cheaper rate
- Makes me feel more trusting towards retailers

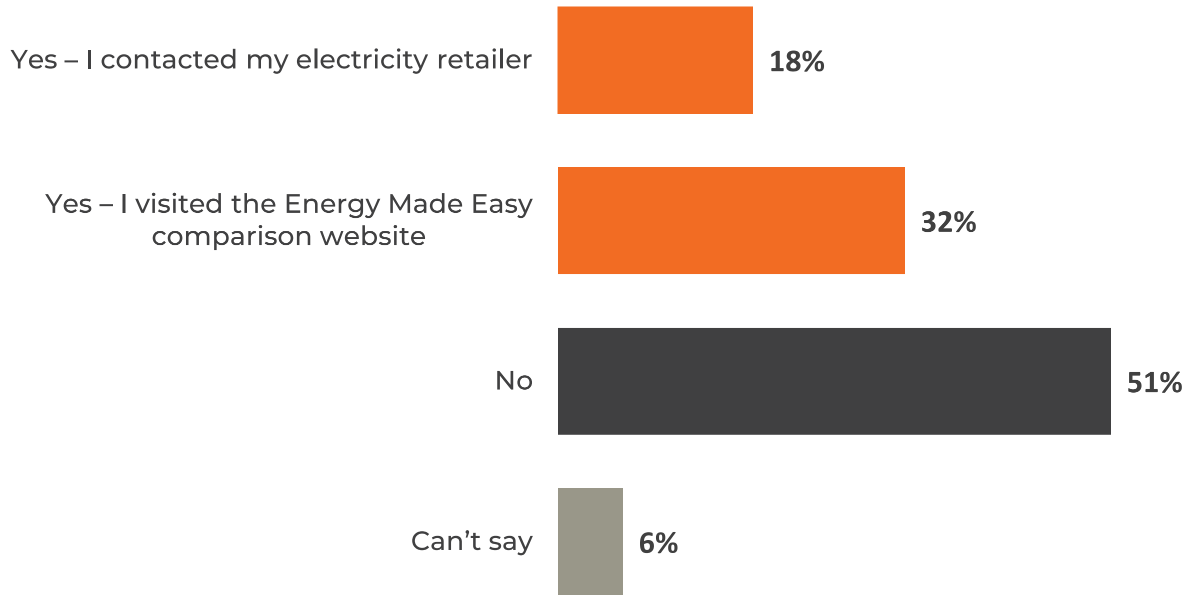
Why not useful?

- Already do this kind of thing myself
- Haven't felt the need / too much hassle / stick with current
- Still lots of information to go through
- Retailer not interested in me saving money

All who recall seeing message to call retailer / refer to Energy Made Easy website n=276

Message on bill to contact retailer / visit website:
And almost half who recalled seeing this took some action

All aware of message on bill to call retailer / visit Energy Made Easy website
Q. Did the message prompt you to contact your electricity retailer and / or visit the Energy Made Easy website?

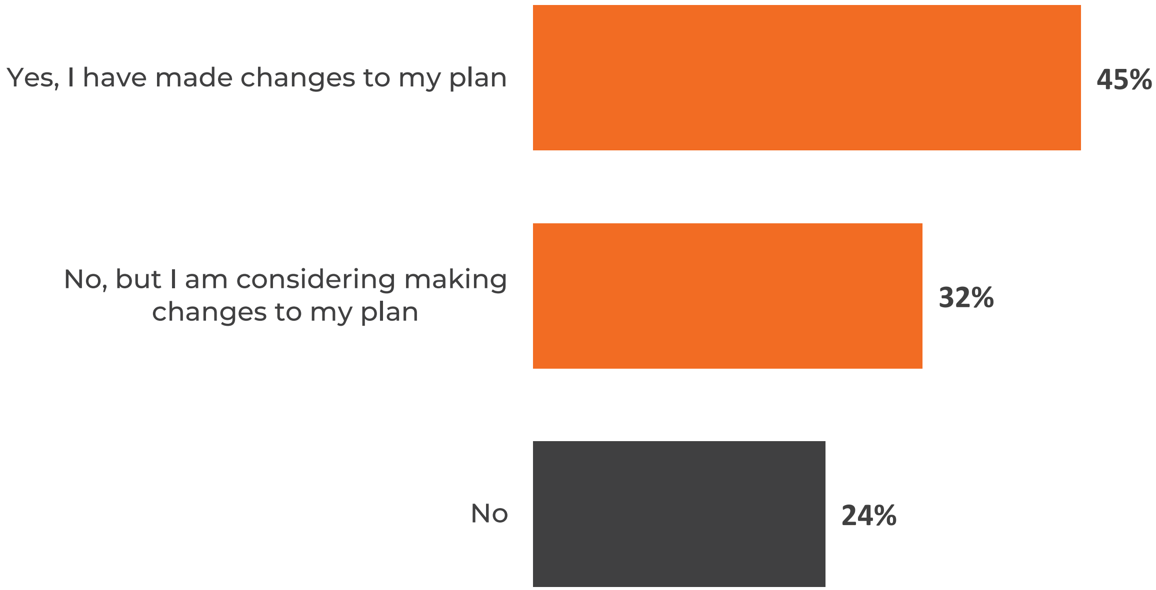


In total this equates to 3% of all respondents contacting their electricity retailer and 6% visiting the Energy Made Easy website as a result of seeing the message on their bill

All who recall seeing message to call retailer / refer to Energy Made Easy website n=276

Message on bill to contact retailer / visit website: Many who acted on this changed plan or are considering it

All who called retailer / visited Energy Made Easy website after seeing message on bill
Q. And have you made any changes to your electricity plan as a result?



In total this equates to 3% of all respondents having changed their plan after seeing the message on their bill

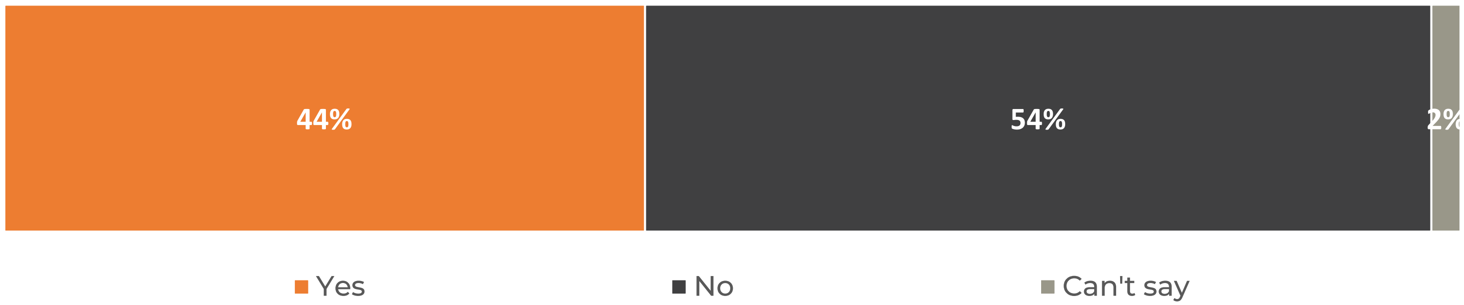
A further 2% are considering this

All who contacted retailer / visited Energy Made Easy website n=135

Conversations with electricity retailers

Overall, more than four out of ten respondents have spoken to their electricity retailer in the last twelve months

Q. Have you spoken to your electricity retailer for any reason within the last 12 months?



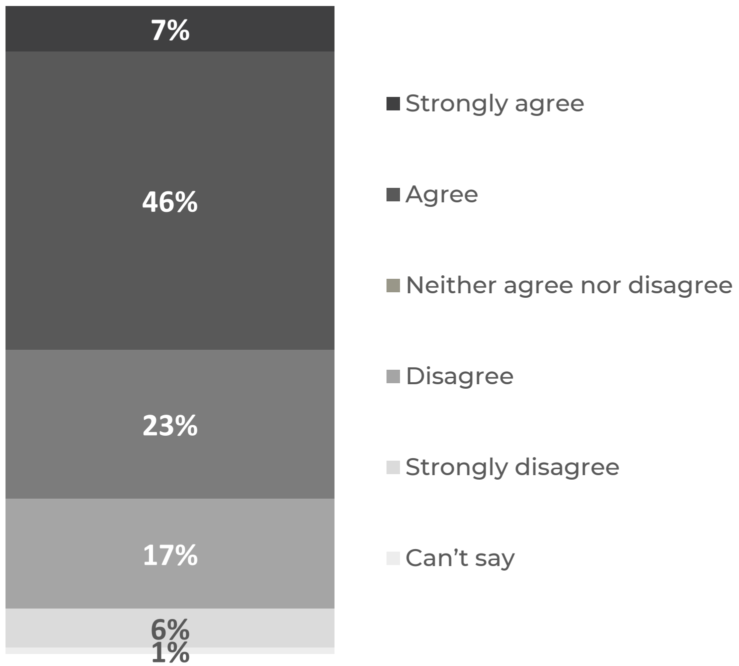
There are no significant differences by age or other demographic characteristic when it comes to whether they have spoken with their retailer or not

However, householders who have rooftop solar are more likely to have spoken to their electricity retailer in the last twelve months (52%)

n=1512

Just over half who have spoken to retailer feel these conversations have been clear and easy to understand

Q. How much do you agree or disagree with the following?
Conversations with my electricity retailer have been clear and easy to understand.



Respondents less confident that they are on the best plan for their circumstances are more likely to feel that conversations have not been clear and easy to understand

CALD respondents are significantly more likely to disagree that conversations have been clear and easy to understand (32%, compared to 23% for non-CALD)

All who have spoken to electricity retailer in last 12 months n=660

Comments about conversations with retailers often reflect issue resolution and complex concepts or language used

Q. If you have any comments about these experiences, let us know below.

Positive comments

- Helpful and able to address issue
- Well-prepared and knowledgeable
- Friendly and personable
- Proactive, keen to put you on best plan, give you the best deal (to hold on to you as a customer)

Issues and challenges

- Conflicting advice, incomplete information
- Lots of jargon, technical terms etc
- Complexity of plans, tariffs, charges etc – very difficult to compare different options
- Depends on who you get to talk to
- Pushed to use online options
- Convoluted, long-winded processes

All who have spoken to electricity retailer in last 12 months n=660

Other comments and issues

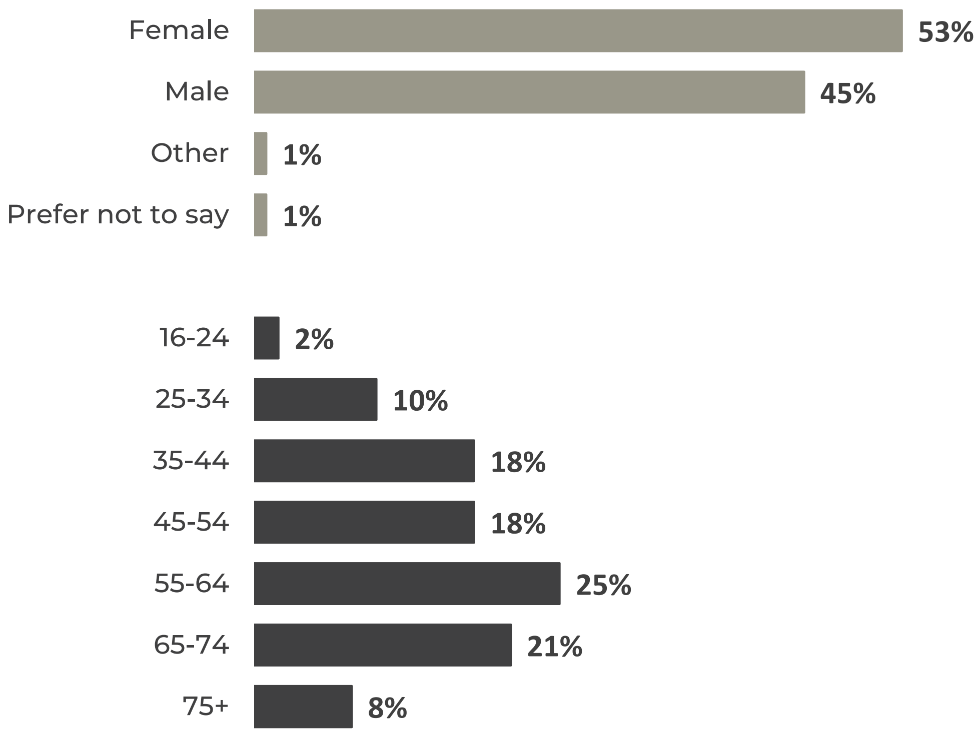
Other comments and themes raised

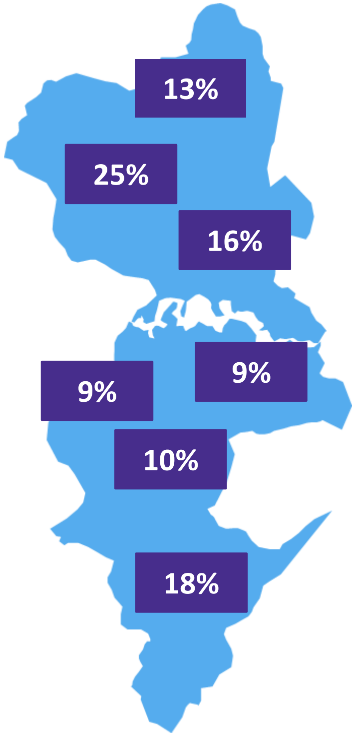
Q. That's all the questions we wanted to ask today…is there anything else you would like to add about this topic?

- Limited choice of electricity retail options in the ACT
- Issues with solar – locked in to contracts, feed in tariffs, caps etc
- Would like / plan to install solar, go all-electric
- Survey has prompted me to look at current plan – thanks!
- Rising prices – nothing seems to help these come down
- Need fewer, simpler plans so it's easier to compare
- Retailers deliberately confusing / complex / technical language
- Don't take much interest in bills, money automatically debited

Appendix

Survey sample profile (unweighted)





* Totals may not add up to 100% due to rounding

n=1562

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About the YourSay Panel

- Around **6,000** Panel members have signed up to have their say through the YourSay Community Panel
- The Panel captures the pulse of the community at a given point in time through regular online surveys about a range of topics
- Panellists are recruited through a mix of online and offline channels but must have internet access and an email account to take part
- The Panel closely resembles the overall ACT population by age, gender, region as well as a range of other demographic characteristics
- Members are invited to take part in approximately two activities per month and participation is completely voluntary
- The membership base is highly active with around 4 in 10 members completing each survey on average
- Regular checks are made to ensure results are accurate by comparing them to other independent survey research

5,977
Current members

30-40%
Survey response rate

84%
Active in past 12 months

45+
Major surveys completed