

ICRC Electricity survey

FINAL REPORT
21 September 2023



Background

This report presents the findings of the Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission (ICRC) electricity survey.

Previous YourSay Panel research was conducted on behalf of ICRC in November 2019 and August 2022, with some questions repeated in the 2023 survey for tracking purposes. The 2023 survey also included new questions on the impact that electricity prices are currently having on households and what actions (if any) households are taking to manage this.

Methodological notes:

- All YourSay Panel members were invited to participate.
- The results have been weighted by age, gender and region using 2021 ABS Census population data. Figures relating to sample sizes (e.g. “n=”) have been displayed as unweighted counts throughout the report.
- For questions repeated in previous years, significance testing has been conducted by comparing results between 2022 and 2023.
 - Results from 2023 that are significantly higher than 2022 have been marked with a green upwards arrow (↑), whereas results that are significantly lower than 2022 have been marked with a purple downwards arrow (↓).
- Further significance testing has been conducted on 2023 results examining differences by age, gender and solar panel ownership.
 - Results that are significantly higher than the total result have been marked with a blue upwards arrow (↑), whereas results that are significantly lower have been marked with a red downwards arrow (↓).



How many?

1,409

Who?

Canberrans 18+

When?

21 – 27 Aug 2023

Executive summary



Cost-of-living and price impacts are resonating

- In 2023, 84% of respondents selected 'price' as one of the most important factors when choosing an electricity plan. While this result was consistent with 2022, several other factors recorded a significant drop compared to 2022, suggesting that 'price' is strongly at the forefront of consumers' minds when choosing an electricity plan.
- There is also widespread perception of rising electricity prices, with 76% indicating their household electricity bill has gone up compared to the same period last year. Those who feel their bill has stayed the same or decreased are significantly more likely to feel confident that they are on the best plan for their circumstances.



Age differences emerge in approaches and preferences for choosing an electricity plan

- Younger respondents (18-34 years) were more likely to find their current electricity plan by looking for options themselves (52%, compared to 40% overall) and they were also more likely to use the Energy Made Easy comparison website (23%, compared to 14% overall).
- Older respondents (aged 55+) were less likely to use these avenues and, when considering a plan, were more likely to value customer service (35%, compared to 27% overall), suggesting this cohort may require a more supportive and guided approach to finding the most appropriate plan.



Males and those with solar were more likely to actively review their electricity plan

- Almost six in ten respondents (57%) indicated they had either compared or switched electricity plans in the past 12 months. This behaviour was more common for males (66%) and those with household solar (65%).
- Such behaviour was also reflected when asked whether 'I review my electricity plan fairly regularly' – 39% of respondents agreed with this in total, again higher among males (46%) and those with household solar (49%).



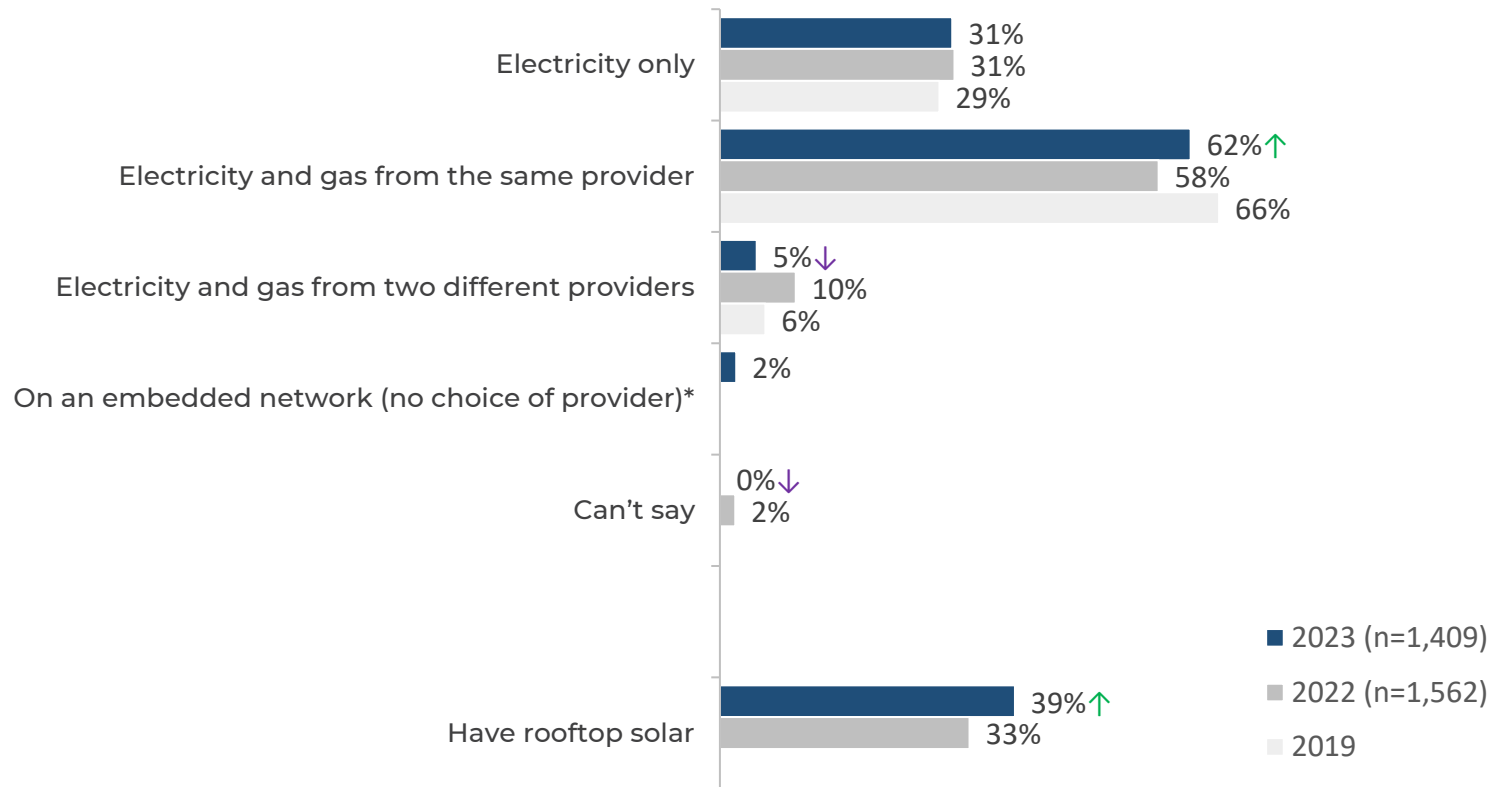
Consumers can feel like there is limited choice in the ACT electricity market

- Just 16% of respondents agreed that 'there is a good choice of different electricity providers in the ACT', with almost half (44%) disagreeing that this was the case.
- Comments raised in an open-ended question at the end of the survey (which asked for unprompted final comments) highlighted the lack of choice as a key theme. Comments were not only raised on the lack of competition in the ACT, but also in terms of how retailers have created a market where it feels too difficult to make an informed choice. This includes perceptions of retailers taking actions that don't put the interests of consumers at heart (e.g., purposely make it hard for consumers to easily compare different offers, only sharing better plans when the consumer threatens to leave, switching the conditions of their plan shortly after renewing).

Results

Household energy use

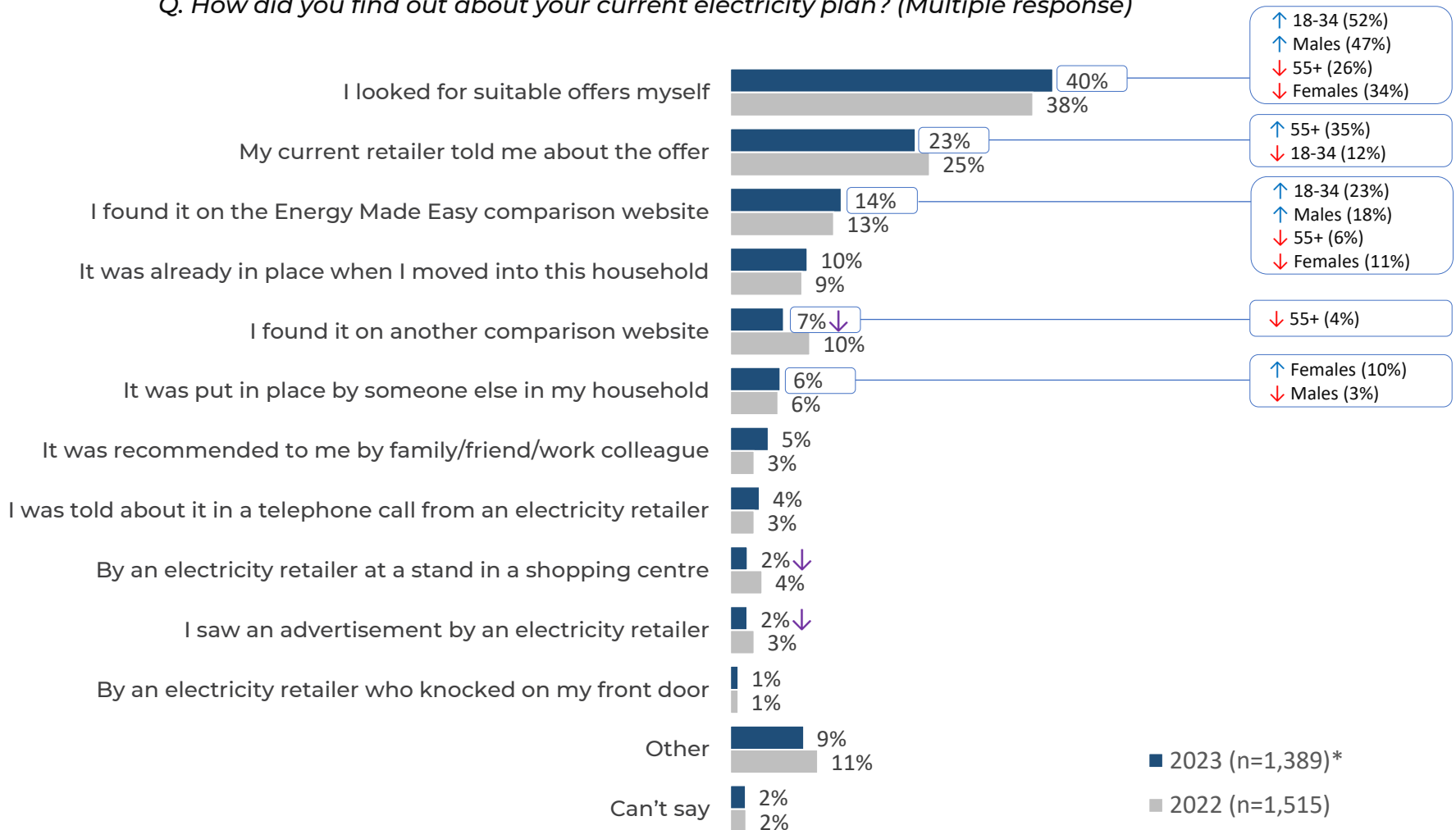
Q. Which of the following best applies to your household's energy use?



* This option was a new addition to the 2023 survey.

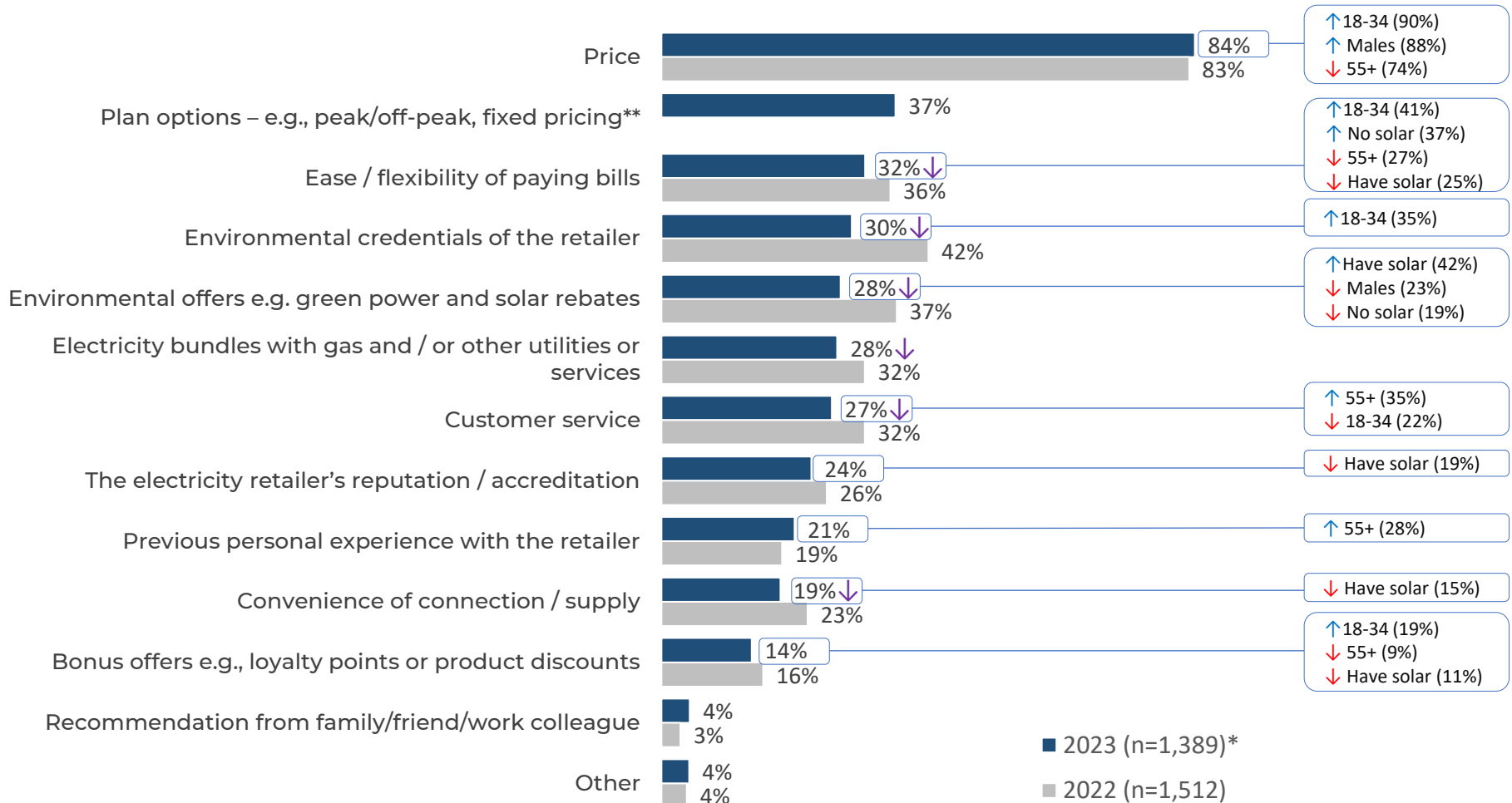
Current electricity plan

Q. How did you find out about your current electricity plan? (Multiple response)



Choosing an electricity plan

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



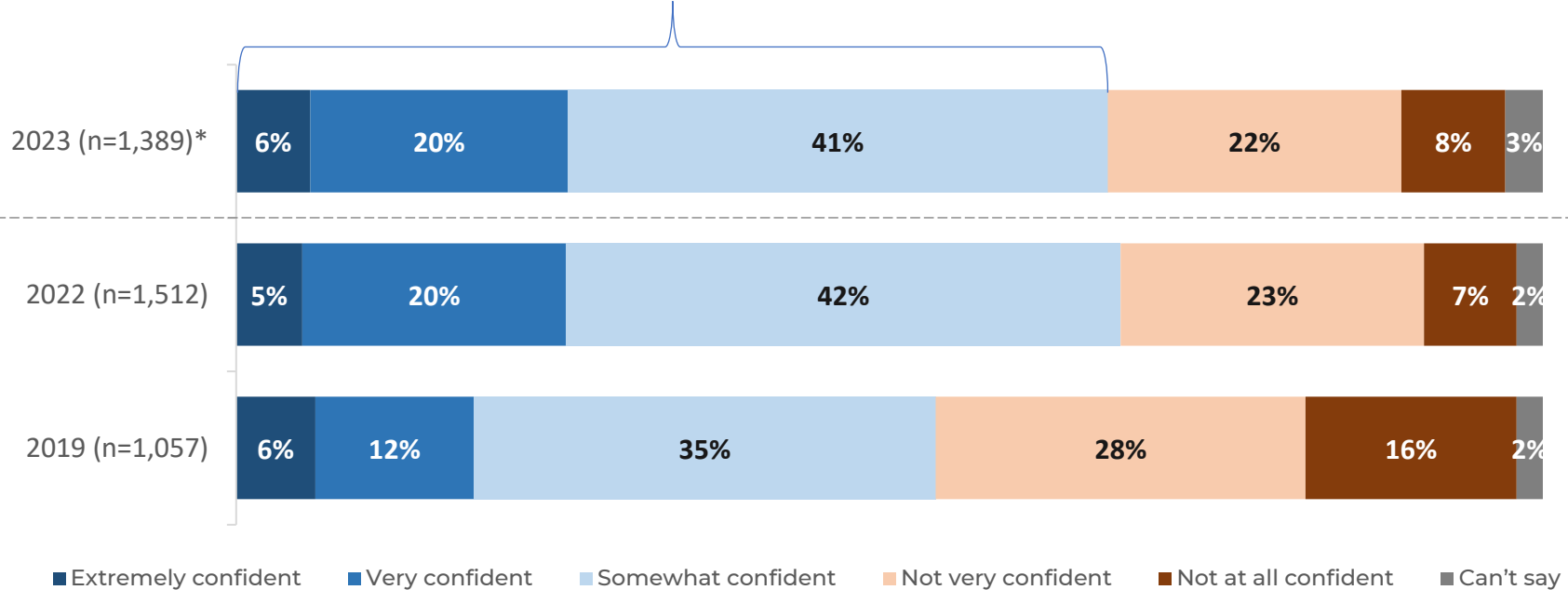
* Respondents on an embedded network (n=20) were not asked this question.

** This option was a new addition to the 2023 survey.

Confidence that electricity plan is best-suited

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

67% feel at least somewhat confident they are on the best electricity plan for their circumstances;
 this result was significantly higher for those with solar (73%↑) and lower for those without solar (62%↓).

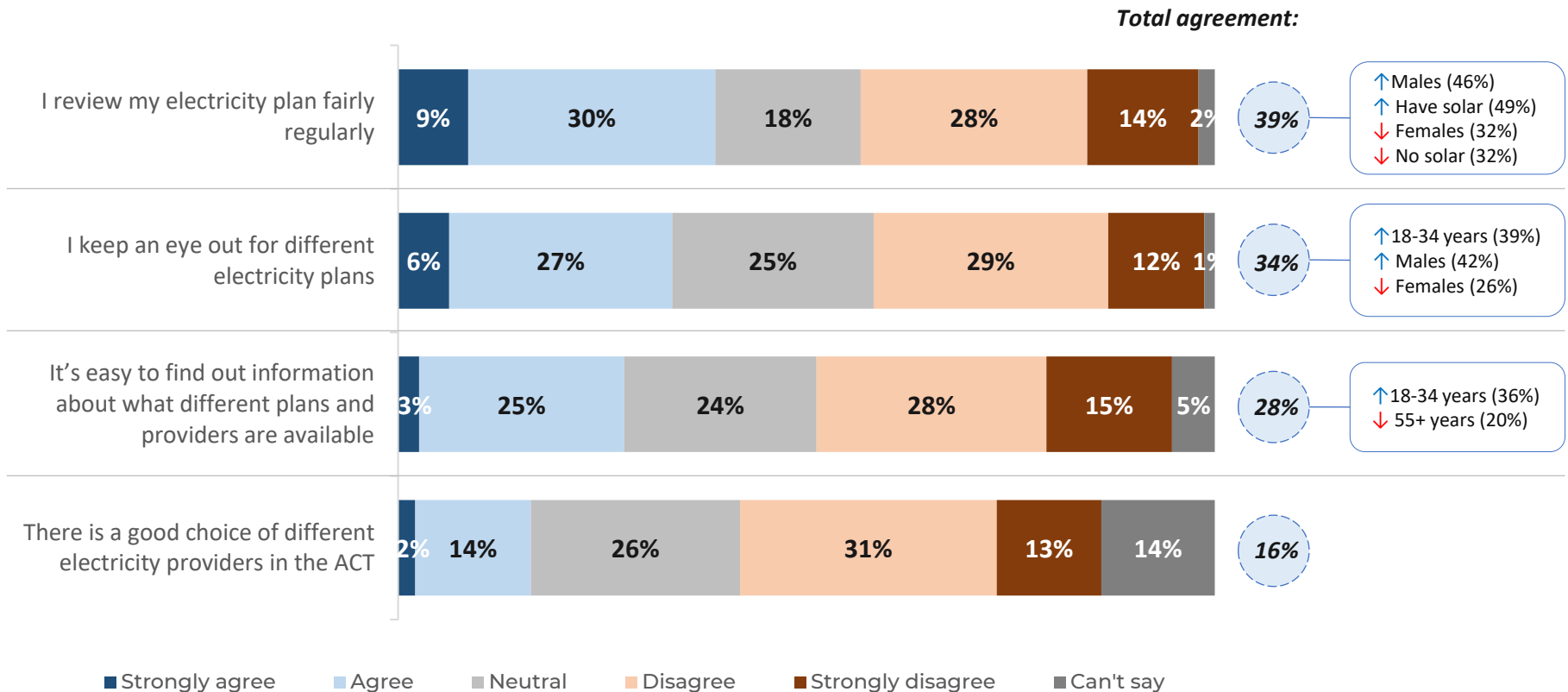


No significant differences were observed between 2023 and 2022 results.
 * Respondents on an embedded network (n=20) were not asked this question.

Agreement statements

Q. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following?

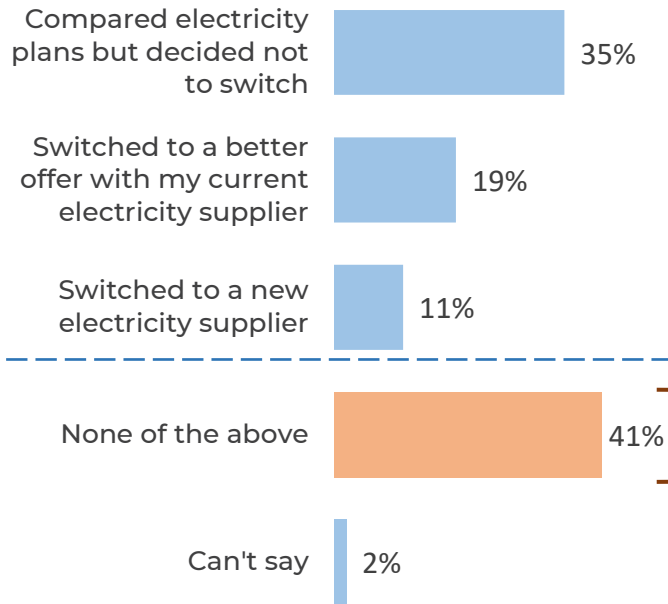
(Base: n=1,389)*



Switching behaviours

Q. Have you/your household done any of the following in the last 12 months?

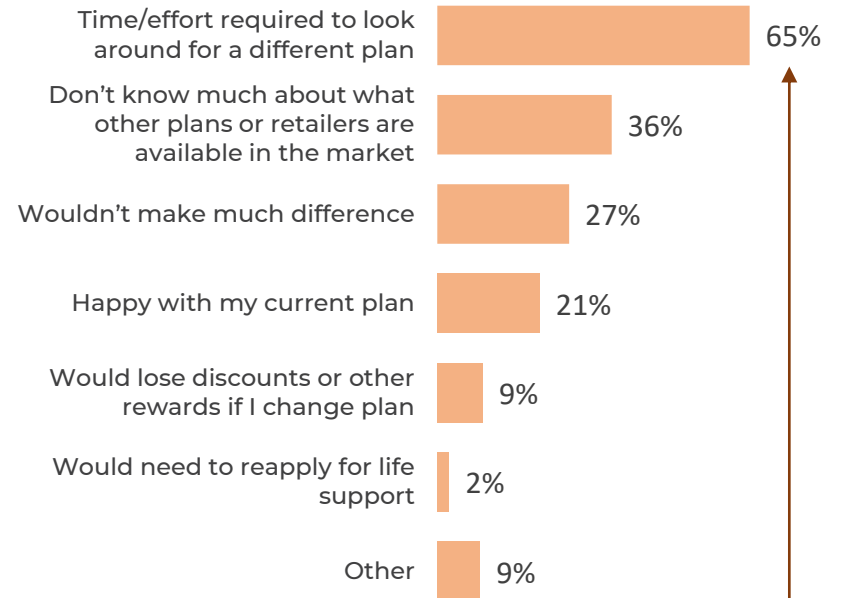
(Multiple response, Base: n=1,389)*



57% of the total sample have done at least one of these behaviours; this was significantly more likely among those aged 35-54 (63%↑), males (66%↑), and those with solar (65%↑), and conversely less likely among females (50%↓) and those without solar (53%↓).

Q. Why have you **not** switched, or considered switching, electricity plans in the past 12 months?

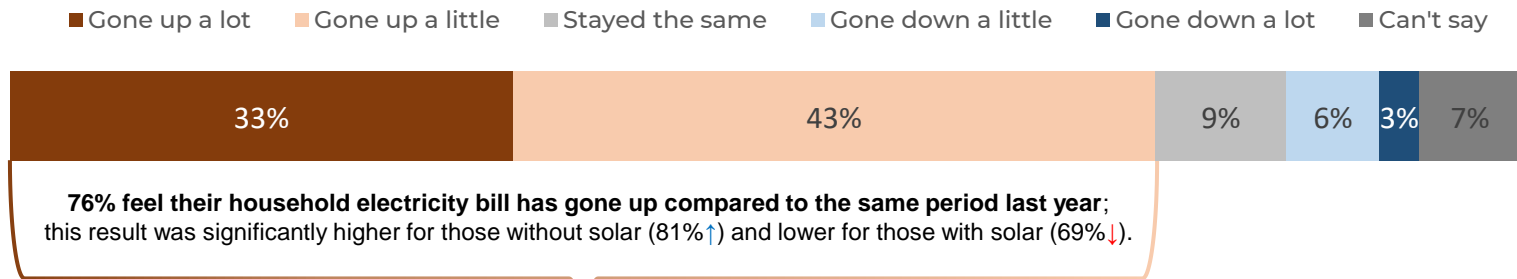
(Multiple response, Base: n=581)*



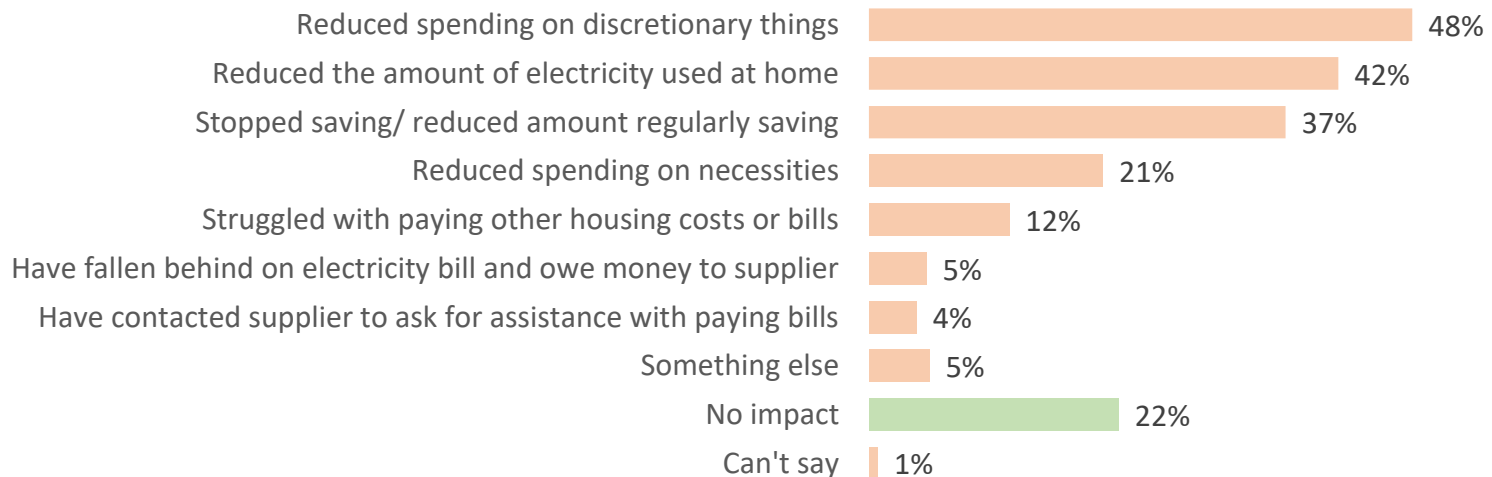
The 'time/effort required to look around for a different plan' was more likely to be selected by those aged 18-34 (82%↑) and those without solar (72%↑). Conversely, those aged 55+ (46%↓) and those with solar (52%↓) were less likely to select this option.

Comparing electricity bill to last year

Q. Compared with the same period last year, would you say the amount your household pays for electricity has...
 (Base: All respondents, n=1,409)

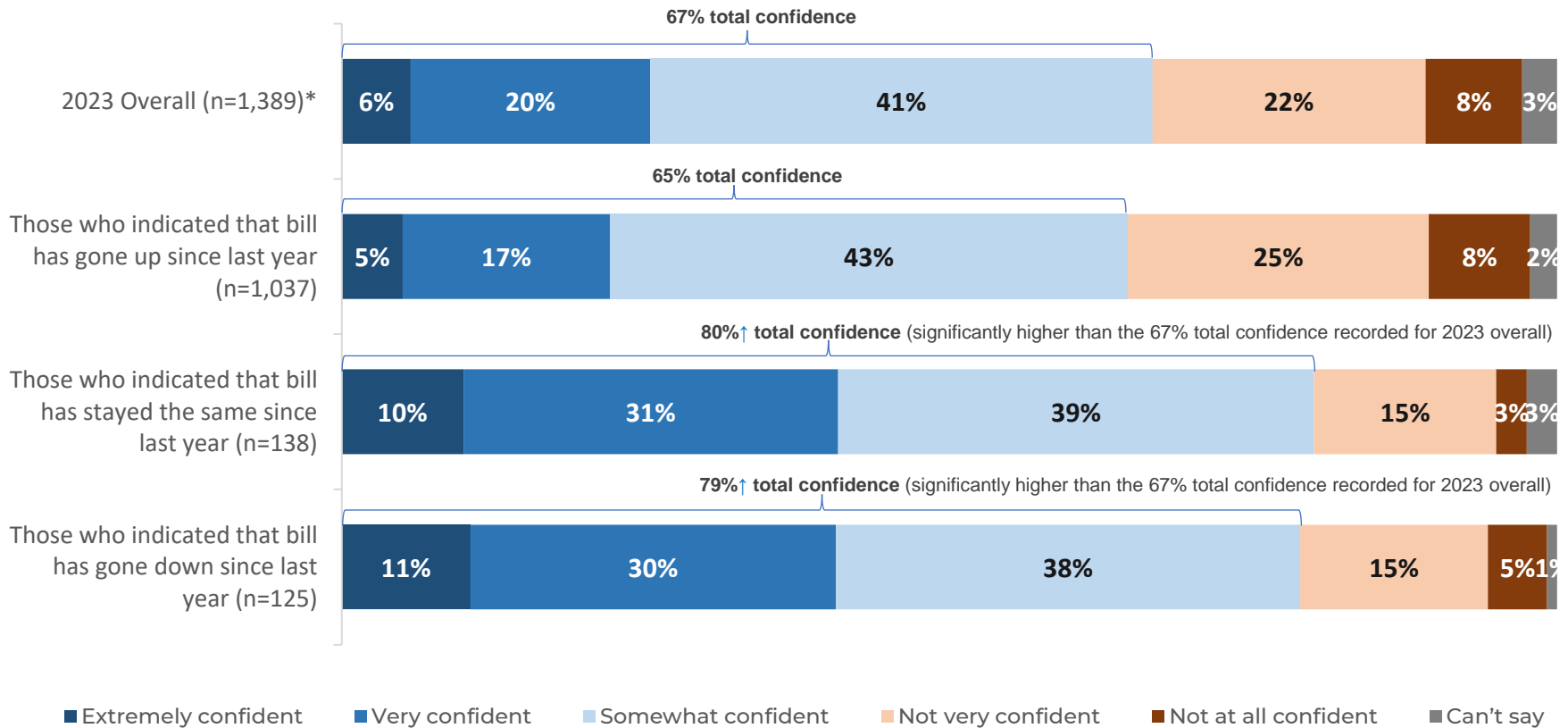


Q. What impacts, if any, have the increased costs of electricity had on your household?
 (Multiple response, Base: n=1,055)



Confidence in plan (split by whether their bill has increased or not)

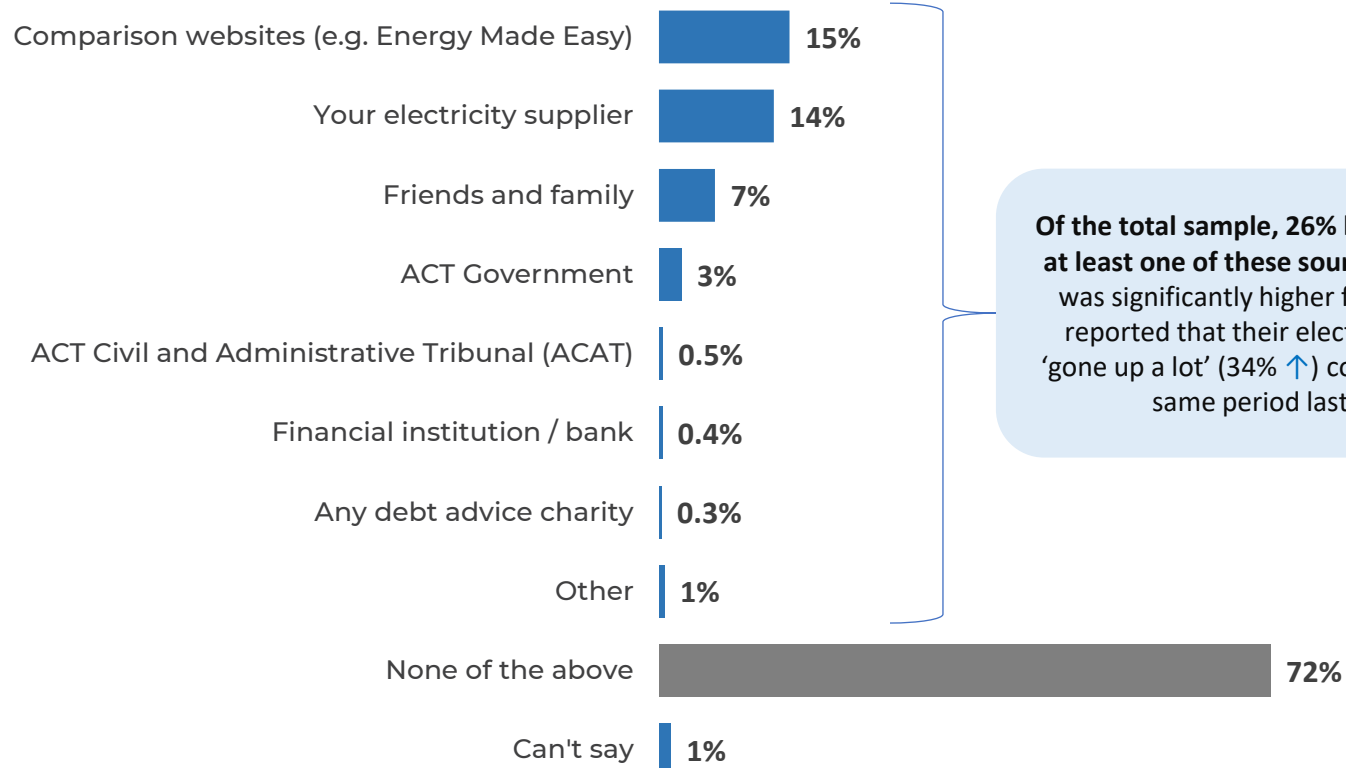
Q. Overall, how confident are you that you are on the best electricity plan for your circumstances?



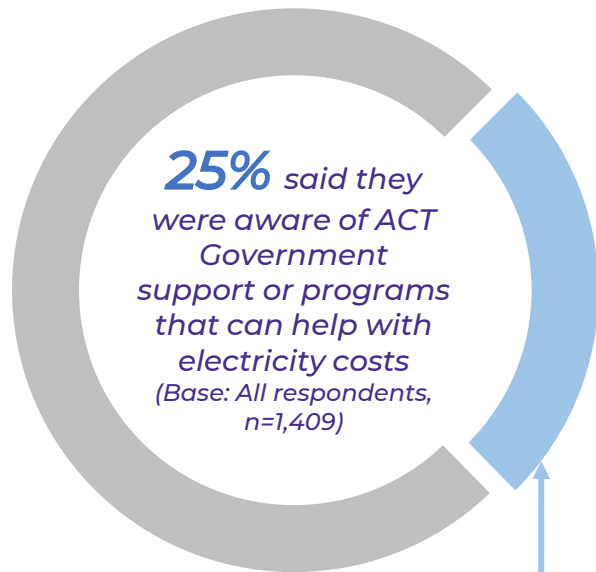
Sought information on electricity bills

Q. Have you contacted any of the following for information, advice or support with paying your electricity bills in the past 12 months?

(Multiple response, Base: All respondents n=1,409)

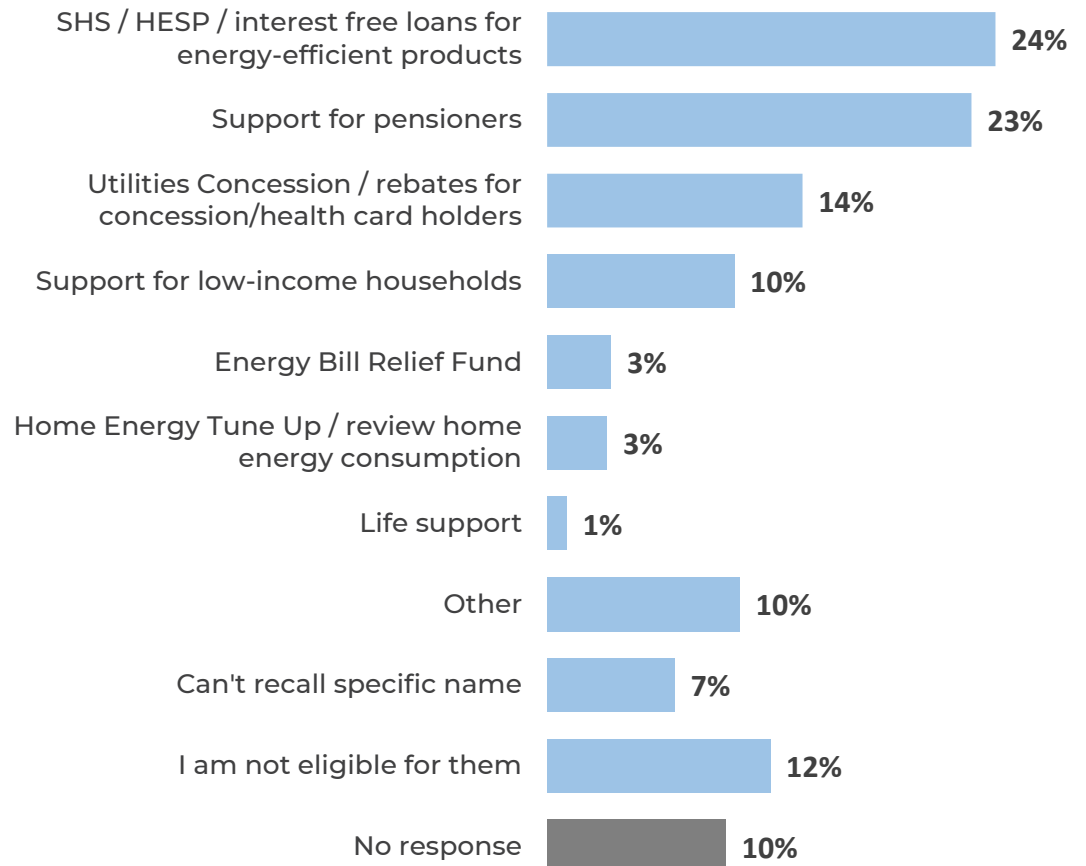


Awareness of support programs



Those aged 55+ (32%↑) and those with solar (32%↑) were more likely to be aware, and conversely, those without solar were less likely to be aware (20%↓).

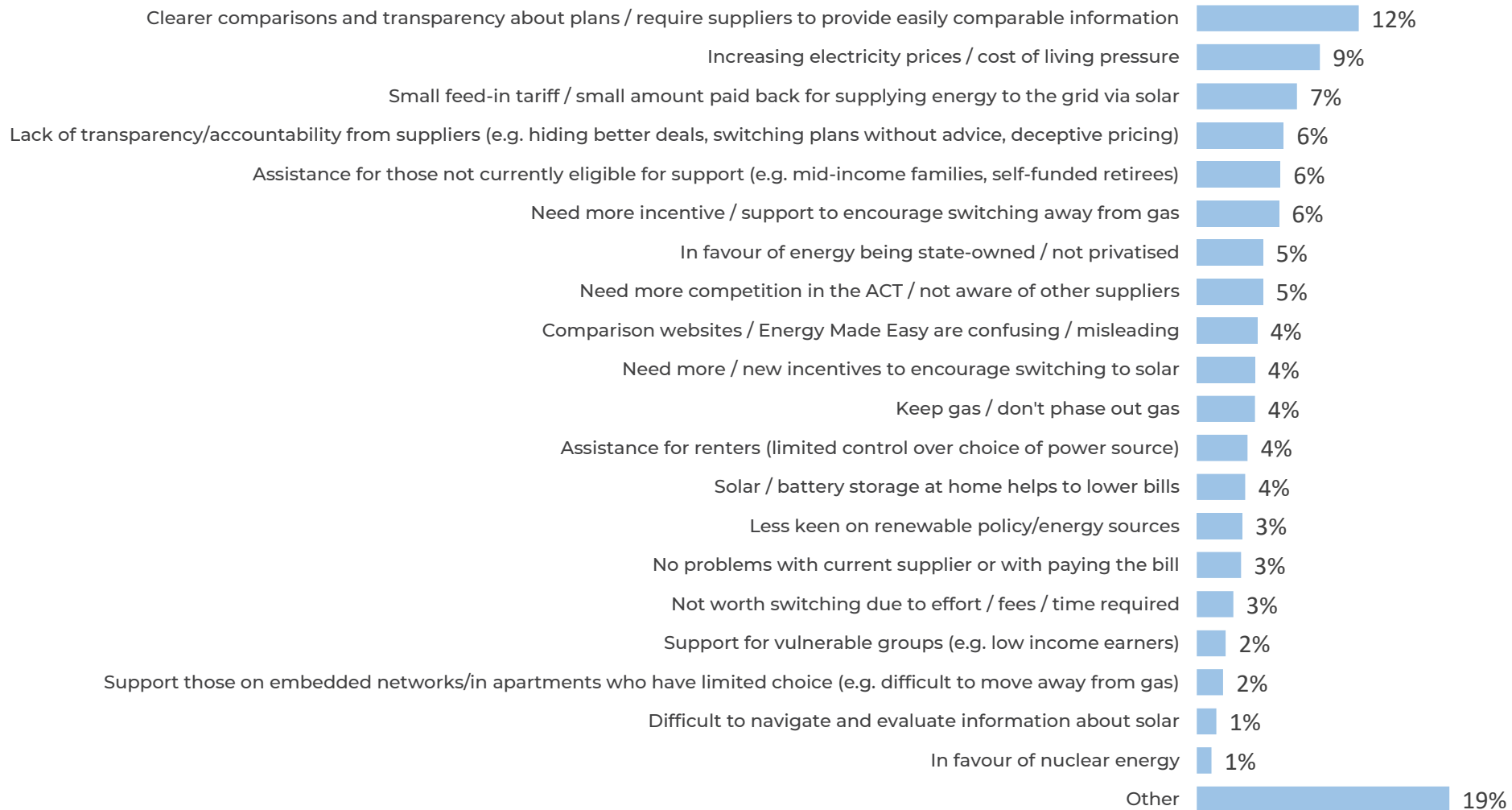
Q. What support or programs are you aware of?
(Open-ended question, Base: n=388)



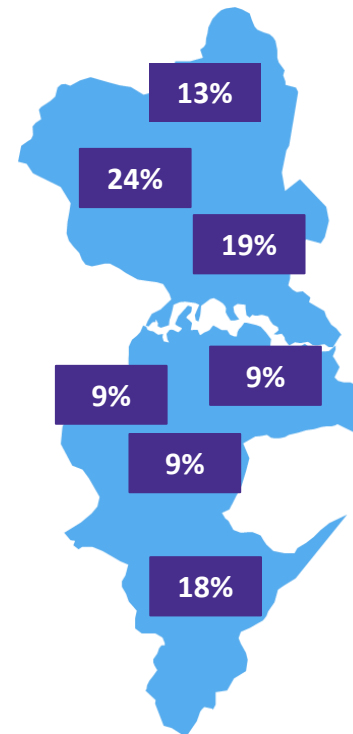
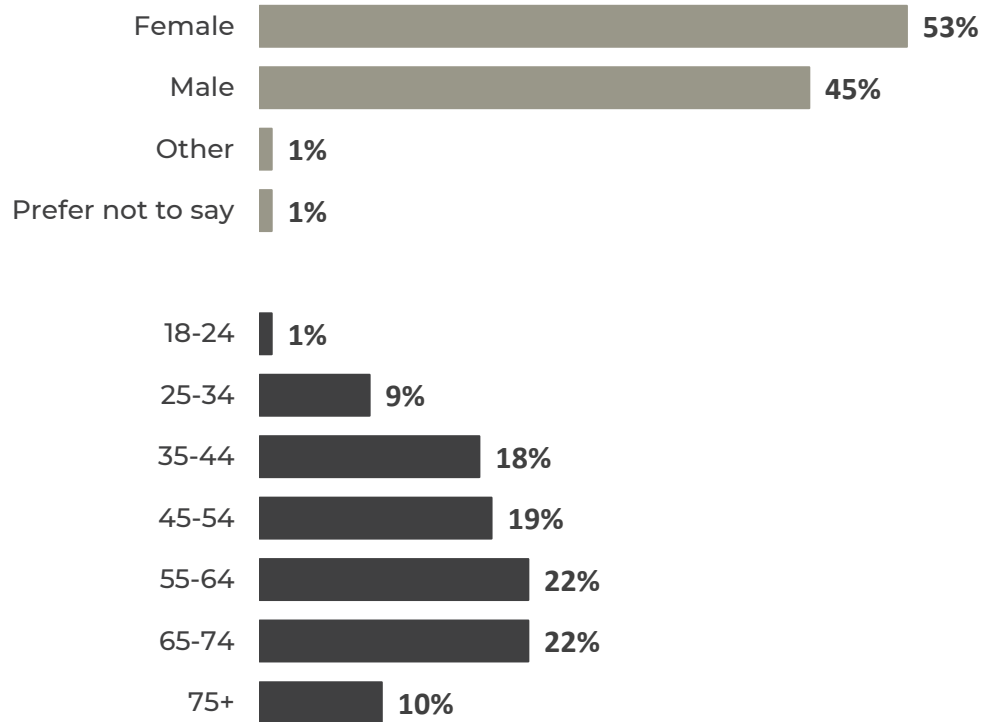
Final comments

Q. Is there anything else you would like to add about this topic?

(Open-ended question, n=408)



Sample profile (n=1,409 unweighted)





ACT
Government

YOUR SAY
PANEL