

PRESS RELEASE

London, 11 June 2013

ONE IN FIVE PENSIONERS WORRY ABOUT ENERGY BILLS WHEN BOILING THE KETTLE

- *64% of Brits would vote for a government that committed to cutting energy bills*
- *42% of UK consumers hold the government responsible for reducing electricity bills*
- *A quarter of Brits say renting is holding them back from investing in energy efficiency*

London, UK 11 June 2013 – A survey of UK adults by the Rexel Foundation and OpinionWay, published today, reveals that three quarters of British consumers are worried about their energy bills, with the elderly being hit hardest. This is not surprising after a particularly long winter but with energy prices continuing to rise, one in seven respondents admitted to feeling the ‘light-switch blues’ every time they turn on a light or appliance, with this figure rising to one in five among the over-65s.

Consumers are so concerned about the cost of energy that 64% are more likely to or would definitely vote for a government that could help them cut their bills. The Government plays a key role in the minds of the British public. When asked who should be responsible for improving energy efficiency in the home, the most popular answer was the government (42%). This was closely followed by energy companies (40%) while only 30% said consumers themselves should be responsible. This is a very different picture when compared to France where energy companies come top with 35% and Germany and the US, where consumers think they have the greatest responsibility themselves (34% and 42% respectively).

As a result of the increased concern about bills, 68% of people have made energy efficiency improvements to their homes in the past five years. Four in five (79%) of these cited reducing bills as the main motivation and 27% said the environment was a key driver. In fact, most consumers see the potential of energy efficiency products and solutions, with 89% of Brits convinced that investing in energy efficiency products such as LED lighting, energy efficient heating and air conditioning or better insulation will allow them to reduce their bills. Almost half (41%) think they could save up to 20% or more.

Despite high levels of confidence in energy efficiency upgrades to reduce bills, the majority of consumers (63%) say that cost and other financial considerations are holding them back, followed by renters not feeling it would be worth their while (24%). The choice of technologies available is also too overwhelming for 21% of people.

Drilling down into the financial barriers, the top concern (35%) was a lack of disposable income to invest in energy efficiency and the reluctance to borrow money and get into debt (23%).

Brian Smithers, strategic development director for Rexel Northern European Zone, comments, “The cost concern is understandable given that everyone is counting the pennies a bit more at the moment, but it highlights a worrying lack of awareness about incentives such as the Green Deal, which allow homeowners to access funding for energy efficiency at no upfront cost. There’s clearly an awareness gap here that needs to be addressed.



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UNDER THE AEGIS OF THE FONDATION DE FRANCE

“With the UK feeling the pinch of a long, cold winter and energy prices continuing to rise, it’s no surprise people are worried about the rising costs. Energy efficiency upgrades can be an effective way to save money and with a number of financial incentives available, many more people should be able to invest. Yet these messages are just not making it through.

“To help consumers alleviate the ‘light-switch blues’, it’s crucial for the Government and industry to work together to educate people about how to take advantage of the help already in place to upgrade their homes and make changes to their behaviour to increase energy efficiency and reduce their bills.”

On attitudes towards energy efficiency improvements...
92% feel that more people will be unable to pay their bills and fall into fuel poverty if nothing is done to improve energy efficiency in the future.
96% believe that the cost of energy will continue to rise if nothing is done to improve energy efficiency in the future.
88% say political tensions will rise as we become more dependent on other countries to provide our energy if nothing is done to improve energy efficiency in the future.
83% agree that irreversible damage will be made to the environment if nothing is done to improve energy efficiency in the future.
41% of Brits feel they could save 20% or more on their energy bills per year if they did invest in energy efficient solutions/products.
On adoption and motivations...
Four in five (79%) British consumers have cited reducing bills as the main motivation for having made energy efficiency improvements and 27% said the environment was a driver.
Brits are also the least likely to invest in home energy efficiency improvements. 68% have made improvements (56% in wall, roof or window insulation, 41% in LED lighting, 20% in energy audits, 17% in energy efficient heating and/or air conditioning systems, 15% in smart metering, 4% in home automation and 3% in occupancy sensors or other smart technology). This is in comparison to 76% in Germany, 75% in the US, and 70% in France.
On barriers to adoption of energy efficient technologies...
63% of Brits say that cost and other financial considerations are holding them back from making energy efficient improvements to their homes, followed by renters not feeling it would be worth their while (24%). The choice of technologies available is also too overwhelming for 21% of people.
Drilling down into the financial barriers, the top concern (35%) was a lack of disposable income to invest in energy efficiency and a reluctance to borrow money and get into debt (23%).
On responsibility...
64% of Brits would vote for a government that committed to cutting energy bills
When asked who should be responsible for improving energy efficiency in the home, the most popular answer was the government (42%). This was closely followed by energy companies (40%) while only 30% said consumers themselves should be responsible. This is very different from France, where energy companies come top with 35%, and Germany and the US, where consumers think they have the greatest responsibility themselves (34% and 42% respectively).
On influencers...
Interestingly, utilities companies are the source consumers would most listen to change their behaviours to make more energy efficient improvements to their homes, according to 40% of respondents. 22% say neighbours, family and friends, and 20% the media.

-ENDS-

Notes to editor

Methodology



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2,027 UK consumers (18 years and over) were interviewed using an online system in April 2013 by Opinion Way. 2,133 consumers in France, 2,020 in Germany and 2,021 in the US were also interviewed as part of the study. The survey was conducted in accordance with the ISO 20252 best practice standard.

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About the Rexel Foundation for a better energy future

The Rexel Foundation for a better energy future was founded in May 2013 by the Rexel Group, a global leader in the professional distribution of products and services for the energy world, under the aegis of the Fondation de France. The Rexel Foundation's mission is to promote access to energy efficiency for all based on three key pillars: to improve understanding and raise awareness of energy efficiency; to encourage innovation through research and education, and to support community projects both in France and abroad in partnership with NGOs, social entrepreneurs and other key stakeholders.

For more information, please visit: www.rexelfoundation.com

About Rexel UK

Rexel UK operates through 5 operating businesses in the UK and Ireland (Newey& Eyre, Denmans, the newly merged WF and Senate, Parker Merchanting, and Wilts Wholesale Electrical) selling to a wide range of customers from small electrical contractors to major contracting companies and international end users. With sales over €950m in 2011, Rexel UK, the country's market leader, operates through a national network of 400 branches with a highly developed service proposition.

For more information, please visit: www.rexel.co.uk

About Rexel Group

Rexel, a global leader in the professional distribution of products and services for the energy world, addresses three main markets - industrial, commercial and residential. The Group supports customers around the globe, wherever they are, to create value and run their businesses better. With a network of some 2,300 branches in 37 countries, and over 31,000 employees, Rexel's sales were €13.4 billion in 2012. Its major shareholders are an investor group led by Clayton, Dubilier & Rice, Eurazeo and BAML Capital Partners.

Rexel is listed on the Eurolist market of Euronext Paris (compartment A, ticker RXL, ISIN code FR0010451203). It is included in the following indices: SBF 120, CAC Mid 100, CAC AllTrade, CAC AllShares, FTSE EuroMid, FTSE4Good, STOXX600, STOXX Europe Sustainability, Euronext Vigeo Europe 120 and ASPI Eurozone.

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