“I’m pleased to launch the new Super Smart Energy Savers Report alongside a panel of experts and consumer champions, to help people to see what support is available so they can regain control of their energy bills.”

- Victoria Bacon, Smart Energy GB
Introduction

In April 2022, the price cap that exists to limit how much consumers pay for the cost of energy was increased.

This increase affects anyone who is on a standard variable rate tariff (SVT) and means approximately 22 million people across Britain will see their energy bills rise by up to 54%. According to Ofgem, this would see households with an average annual energy spend of £1,277 face bills of up to £1,971 per year.

The soaring cost of energy, food and fuel alongside rising interest rates and a hike in national insurance has catapulted the UK into a ‘cost of living crisis’, with ONS data showing that living costs hit a 30 year high in January 2022.

And there are more challenges on the horizon. The energy price cap is set to increase again in October 2022, putting even more strain on household budgets.

This report has been devised in response to these challenges and is based on new research that shows how people are feeling and acting in response to the increasing cost of living pressures, particularly rising energy prices. It also provides actionable advice for those seeking more support and sheds some light on what energy efficiency actions really work.

Research was conducted among 5,000 British adults by Smart Energy GB, the not-for-profit organisation that informs Britain about the benefits of smart meters.

It shows that people across Britain are concerned about the cost of living crisis. Nearly three quarters (73%) have already made changes to the way they use energy in an attempt to offset increasing prices and many are seeking more advice and support.

But uncertainty exists around which changes to make and how effective they will be. In fact, a quarter (25%) of people claim they’re still confused by some of the conflicting energy saving advice available publicly, with only a third (32%) feeling well informed.

Smart Energy GB, together with Helen Skelton, Dominic Littlewood and MoneyMagpie has co-authored the Super Smart Energy Savers Report, providing actionable advice to help manage energy use and household budgets. The panel’s tips can be found in the following pages of this report.
Meet the Super Smart Energy Savers Panel

Helen Skelton
Helen is best known for her presenting roles on shows including Blue Peter, Countryfile and Watchdog, where she has become a trusted voice on consumer issues.

Dominic Littlewood
Dominic is a consumer advocate with a long history of fighting for the rights of British people across shows such as Don’t Get Done, Get Dom, Fake Britain, and Cowboy Builders.

Victoria Bacon, Smart Energy GB
Victoria is a director at Smart Energy GB, the not-for-profit campaign helping everyone in Britain to understand the importance of smart meters and their benefits.

Vicky Parry, MoneyMagpie
An award-winning writer for the UK’s leading self-help money site. As a solutions journalist focusing on the response to social issues, she is an experienced campaigner for social change.
Current usage

Energy is at the heart of the home. It charges the devices we use, lets us watch the latest series on TV and boils water for our cuppas after a long day. With energy use set to increase in the future as we rely more on electricity for things like transport and heating, research in this report reveals some of the most common and extensive ways we currently use it.

Over 24 hours, the average Brit watches TV for **6 hours 30 minutes**, leaves the lights on for **6 hours 29 minutes**, and charges electronic devices for **5 hours 24 minutes**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Duration</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Watches TV</td>
<td>6 hours 30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has lights on</td>
<td>6 hours 29 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charges electronic devices</td>
<td>5 hours 24 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has hot water/immersion turned on</td>
<td>4 hours 30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has appliances plugged in and used</td>
<td>3 hours 44 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has washing machine running</td>
<td>1 hour 34 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses vacuum cleaner</td>
<td>1 hour 5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has dishwasher running</td>
<td>1 hour 4 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has tumble dryer running</td>
<td>1 hour 2 minutes</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
In the past six months, nearly three quarters (73%) of Brits have changed the way they use energy in an attempt to reduce their bills. However, people in some locations throughout the UK are making greater changes than others, with 86% of residents in Wrexham taking steps to cut costs compared to 80% of those in Edinburgh and Belfast, and 75% of those in Newcastle.

While the majority of people are taking steps to reduce energy costs, making changes that are effective can be difficult, with a quarter (25%) of people claiming they’re still confused by conflicting energy saving advice available publicly. Nearly one in three (30%) say they don’t know enough about advice around energy usage, with only a third (32%) feeling well informed.
It’s perhaps not surprising then that two thirds (66%) of people have tried energy efficiency methods that have little to no impact on their energy use. These methods are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32%</td>
<td>Hand-washing dishes rather than turning on the dishwasher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22%</td>
<td>Keeping the heating on permanently at a low setting instead of turning it on and off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21%</td>
<td>Leaving TVs, computers and electronic devices in sleep or hibernate mode overnight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16%</td>
<td>Leaving electronic devices on standby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14%</td>
<td>Binge watching a TV series at once rather than by episode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13%</td>
<td>Setting the heating thermostat on its highest to heat the home quicker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12%</td>
<td>Leaving the lights on permanently instead of turning them on and off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12%</td>
<td>Using portable fans to cool a room</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“People need tangible, long-term solutions. Taking steps like getting a smart meter to monitor energy use and being mindful of how long your devices are on for can go some way to helping Brits feel more equipped and in control of their household budgets.”

— Helen Skelton
So, what really works? Here are some methods that are proving popular with UK households and really do make a difference in cutting down on energy use and saving.

- Only filling the kettle with the amount needed: 50%
- Improving home insulation: 37%
- Turning the TV off completely when not in use: 34%
- Limiting or stopping use of the tumble dryer: 34%
- Unplugging and switching off all sockets when not in use: 32%
- Never leaving electronic devices charging overnight: 31%
- Washing clothes less regularly: 29%
- Limiting use of the dishwasher: 21%
- Having a smart meter installed to help monitor energy usage: 19%
Almost half (48%) of households now have a smart meter installed, allowing them to receive accurate, rather than estimated, bills and monitor what energy is being used in near-real time.

47% of smart meter users say that having one installed has helped them to feel more in control of their energy use, while 54% say that their smart meter has allowed them to better understand their usage.

Simply by having a smart meter and using it to adjust their energy use, people claim they’ve been able to reduce their bills by an average of £366.24 over the course of a year. This saving would cover more than the cost of the average household’s food shop for a month and accounts for 18.5% of the average household spend on energy, which according to Ofgem is currently £1,971 per year.

47% of smart meter users say that having one installed has helped them to feel more in control of their energy use.
Craving control

With prices increasing across food, fuel, and energy, more than a quarter (28%) of UK households currently feel like they have no control over their household budgets.

It’s understandable then, that nearly half (46%) of people said they would like more advice and support in managing household bills or energy saving.

Among the 3.9m £ Britt seeking debt advice for the first time, one in 10 (9%) have turned to energy suppliers or helplines run by organisations like Citizens Advice Bureau (8%) — which saw a record high number of calls in 2022 £.
Younger people seeking most advice

A higher demand for advice on how to manage energy use is apparent among the younger generation. Almost two thirds of Gen Z (ages 18-24) requested support on energy use specifically, compared to only one in 10 (10%) 55-64 year-olds.

Similarly, a further 59% of 18-24 year-olds sought financial advice and debt support due to rising energy prices, compared to only 5% between the ages of 55-64.

To help offset the rising cost of living, Brits are making cut backs in a variety of areas, such as avoiding buying new clothes or limiting takeaway drinks, limiting social occasions or shopping at cheaper supermarkets.

- Avoiding buying new clothes: 30%
- Shopping at cheaper supermarkets: 24%
- Limiting the number of takeaway drinks, such as coffees, purchased: 26%
- Limiting social occasions: 24%
- Reducing the amount spent on personal care: 21%
Concern about the increasing cost of living is spread across Britain, with households in every region of England, as well as in Scotland and Wales, feeling anxious about how they will manage the impact of rising costs.

Almost three-quarters (72%) are worried about the impact of the cost of living crisis and how they will manage it.

- East Anglia — 73%
- East Midlands — 68%
- London — 74%
- North East — 71%
- North West — 72%
- Scotland — 73%
- South East — 71%
- South West — 70%
- Wales — 76%
- West Midlands — 71%
- Yorkshire & the Humber — 71%
The Super Smart Energy Savers Panel’s actionable advice

With high levels of concern and uncertainty, it’s clear that many people are still in the dark about which changes to make and how effective they will be.

With the cost of living crisis set to continue and energy bills rising across Great Britain, it’s vital that households understand what energy habits are having the biggest impact on their bills.

Whilst there may be many elements of the cost of living situation that we can’t control, there are some simple, actionable steps that can be taken to help Brits manage energy use and feel a bit more in control of their households budgets.

If you’re worried about paying your energy bills, additional help and support is available via energy suppliers, or contacting organisations such as Citizen’s Advice Bureau, National Energy Action, and Energy Saving Trust who have lots of useful information on getting financial help and support and advice on energy efficiency.

“Our research shows that many people are still in the dark on what impact some actions will have, but making small changes to how we use energy at home with the help of a smart meter can make a big difference.”

— Victoria Bacon, Smart Energy GB
Energy saving

Only fill the kettle with the amount you need - Overfilling the kettle drains energy and takes longer. If you’re unsure on exactly how much water is required, fill the cups you are using and pour this into the kettle.

Say goodbye to stand-by - Stop leaving electrical appliances such as TVs and radios on stand-by. Instead, simply switch them off to save money.

Use eco-functions - Got a load of clothes to wash, bed sheets to dry or dishes to clean? Machines such as dishwashers and washing machines will have eco functions. Most of the energy they use is to heat the water, so use on an eco-setting which will work at a lower temperature and save energy - in return saving money on your bills. But check the run time of the cycle and reduce this if you can.

Clever charging - The average smartphone will charge in roughly an hour and a half so overnight is longer than required. This results in a waste of energy and can damage the capacity of the battery. Try to get into the habit of charging during the day, perhaps in the morning or when getting home from work.

Leave your laundry - While it’s tempting to do your washing little and often, sometimes it can leave the loads a little lacklustre and barely fill the machine. So, while it means your favourite top is available again quickly, it comes at an increased energy cost. Aim to get in the habit of waiting until you have a full load ready to reduce your energy usage.

Switch up your bulbs - A simple swap to save money on energy is changing your traditional light bulbs to LED light bulbs. These are proven to be more energy efficient, requiring less power and emitting less heat wastage.
Temperature control

Check your insulation and draught-proofing - Properties, particularly older ones, will likely lose heat throughout the day. One of the best ways to reduce energy use is by ensuring insulation is well maintained and draughts that carry heat away are minimised. You can either seek the help of a professional or take simple steps at home which just need a few basic DIY skills:

• Draught-proof your windows with self-adhesive foam strips. Easy to install and cheap to buy, they are a quick way to contain heat in your home. If you’re looking for a more long-term solution, buy metal or plastic strips at a slightly higher cost. Whatever the method, just make sure the strip is the right size for the gap in your window.

• Heat often escapes through external doors, whether that’s the keyhole, letterbox or gaps at the bottom and around the edges. For the keyhole, you can buy a purpose-made cover that drops a metal disc over it, or a brush or flap for the letterbox. Similar to windows, purchase foam, brush or wiper strips for any gaps to keep the heat in.

• Chimneys are a source of unwanted draughts when not in use, but this is easily solved. Call a professional to visit your home and fit a cap over the chimney pot, or if you want to do it yourself, fit a draught excluder around the fireplace.

• Cracks in floorboards and walls may be unsuspecting, but heat can always escape through these. Squirt filler into any gaps in your floor, making sure to use a silicone-based filler that can tolerate pressure and movement through everyday use. However, opt for a cement or hard-setting filler for walls. If there are large cracks, consult a professional to check if there is an underlying problem which needs resolving.

Turn down and time your heating thermostat - Many think that it’s best to leave the heating on continuously at a lower temperature, but as homes will lose heat throughout the day it’s in fact more efficient to only have your heating come on when you really need it. The best way to ensure it’s only on when you need it, is to set a timer.

Don’t heat empty rooms - Whether it’s a spare room you don’t use frequently, or a storage room that is rarely entered, stop heating it to save money. This could be done by turning the radiators off in that room or turning off the individual thermostat.

Close your curtains - Don’t underestimate the power of curtains or blinds. Drawing your curtains helps to retain heat within your home, reducing the loss of warm air so doing so at night or if a room is unoccupied could make a noticeable difference. In summer, they can help keep rooms slightly cooler too by limiting the amount of direct sunlight in the room.
Taking control with smart meters

Get a smart meter - Nearly half of all energy meters across Great Britain are smart meters, with 27.8 million installed so far. Amid rising energy prices, smart meters give people increased visibility over their energy spend and can help them regain control over their finances. They also enable those who use prepay mode to clearly see when they are close to using their emergency credit, helping them to avoid a potentially difficult situation with no energy in their home.

There’s a whole range of benefits including:

• **Increased control** - Smart meters come with an in-home display that shows exactly how much energy is being used in near-real time in pounds and pence. By knowing how much energy is being used and money spent, this enables customers to have more control and encourages small, positive changes to reduce energy use and keep bills down.

• **Greater accuracy** - Rather than providing estimated energy bills, smart meters provide accurate costs based on your actual energy usage. Knowing how much an energy bill is before it arrives can be a helpful tool as people look to manage household budgets.

• **Available at no extra cost** - Gas and electricity suppliers are responsible for providing and fitting smart meters for everyone in Britain by the end of 2025 at no extra cost. All people need to do is contact their energy supplier directly to arrange an installation.

More than a quarter (28%) of households feel they have no control over their household budgets as the cost of energy continues to rise.
Additional help with energy bills

Check eligibility for grants or schemes to help afford energy bills - If you are struggling to pay your bills, you might be able to get help from certain schemes or grants offered by the government or energy suppliers. Some example schemes include:

• **Council tax rebate** - If your home is in council bands A to D, you will get a £150 rebate from your local council to help pay energy bills. If you aren’t eligible for the rebate, the council may still offer financial help if you contact them.

• **Warm Home Discount Scheme** - If you’re on a low income or are getting the Guarantee Credit element of the Pension Credit, you may be able to get £150 off your electricity bill or a £150 voucher for your prepayment meter. Head to GOV.UK to find out more.

• **Energy debt grants** - If you’re in debt to your energy supplier, you may be eligible for a grant to help pay it off. Various suppliers offer grants - just visit your supplier’s website to apply. If you can’t get a grant from your supplier, you may be eligible for a grant from the British Gas Energy Trust, which are available to anyone, even if they aren’t your energy supplier.

• **Priority Services Register** - Those who are of state pension age, disabled, sick or considered ‘vulnerable’ by their energy network can sign up to the Priority Services Register to receive extra support from their energy supplier.

• **Local energy grants** - Grants or schemes run by your local council may be available to you, just head to GOV.UK to check if you’re eligible.
Frugal living sometimes comes with negative connotations, but it doesn’t mean you have to miss out. Instead, it’s about making sensible, informed choices in your daily spending to minimise unnecessary costs and save yourself money.

• **Buy in bulk** - While you shouldn’t let the appeal of a bargain tempt you into buying things you don’t need, purchasing non-perishable items while they are on special offer will save you money in the long-term. When everyday items like toilet paper, toothpaste, pasta, and tinned foods are discounted, picking up a few extra for the store cupboard isn’t a bad idea.

• **Renew with a cheaper car insurance policy** - Never automatically renew your car insurance policy without shopping around first, as your chances of finding a better deal are high. Insurance is an extremely competitive business, so take the cheaper quote back to your current provider and they’ll often match or offer a lower rate to retain your custom.

• **Plan meals in advance** - Each year in the UK, we throw away several million tonnes of household food. One of the best ways to minimise waste is to plan ahead. Check out what you’ve already got in and plan the meals you’re going to eat that week accordingly. Write a shopping list and stick to it, this way you’ll avoid picking up extra items. If you can, go to the shops later in the day as it usually means more items will be reduced.

• **Carpooling** - If you live near colleagues or other families attending the same school and clubs, reach out to them and ask if they would be interested in sharing lifts.

• **Pay by direct debit** - Some energy suppliers charge for a physical copy of your bill, so if you’re able to, set up paperless billing.

• **Check your subscriptions** - Unused direct debits and standing orders are a waste of money, so sift through your bank statements to find all your subscriptions. Things like TV and music streaming services, sports channels, gym memberships, and magazines are easily forgotten. If you’re not using the product regularly and it is out of your budget, then cancel it immediately.

• **Use loyalty schemes and vouchers** - If you use a particular supermarket regularly then make sure you’re signed up for their loyalty scheme, so you can collect points for discounts on future purchases. With some, you don’t just have to use the points in store but can also put them towards a day out or use with one of their reward partners.

“For us, the aim is to share our expertise in how households can manage their money. We hope these tips will provide some much-needed clarity and support in helping households manage their finances through a turbulent year.”

- Vicky Parry, MoneyMagpie
References

Unless stated otherwise, stats quoted are from research of 5,000 nationally representative UK adults and was carried out by OnePoll between 11th and 16th March 2022.

1 The energy price cap increased from 1st April for approximately 22 million customers. Those on default tariffs paying by direct debit will see an increase of £693 from £1,277 to £1,971 per year (difference due to rounding). Prepayment customers will see an increase of £708 from £1,309 to £2,017

2 According to the Office of National Statistics, since late 2021, the UK has experienced several changes to contributory factors leading to rising costs for individuals and businesses. Consumer price inflation has continued to rise to its highest level in almost 30 years (Office of National Statistics)

3 According to the Office of National Statistics, the average household grocery shop is £276 per month, including non-alcoholic drinks (Nimblefins)

4 There are 52,890,044 people over the age of 18 in the United Kingdom (Office of National Statistics). 92.18% of people surveyed were responsible for their bills and so asked about seeking debt advice. 7.54% of this group have sought advice. 7.54% X 52,890,044 = 3,987,900

5 ‘Red alert’ warning as more turn to Citizen’s Advice Bureau than at any point since pandemic began (Citizen’s Advice Bureau)

6 Number of smart meters installed across Great Britain correct as of Q4 2021