



The Energy Diaries

An exploration of lived reality *and* solutions

October 2022



Agenda

Welcome: Mark Belmega, Cadent

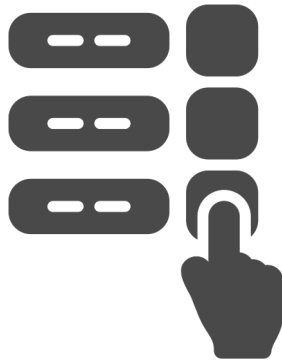
Research findings: Ellie Wroe Wright and Sanne van der Steeg, BritainThinks

Q&A and discussion

Introducing The Energy Diaries



We engaged in depth with members of the public, as energy bills started to increase in spring and supplemented insight with polling this summer



Experience research
18th March – 18th April 2022

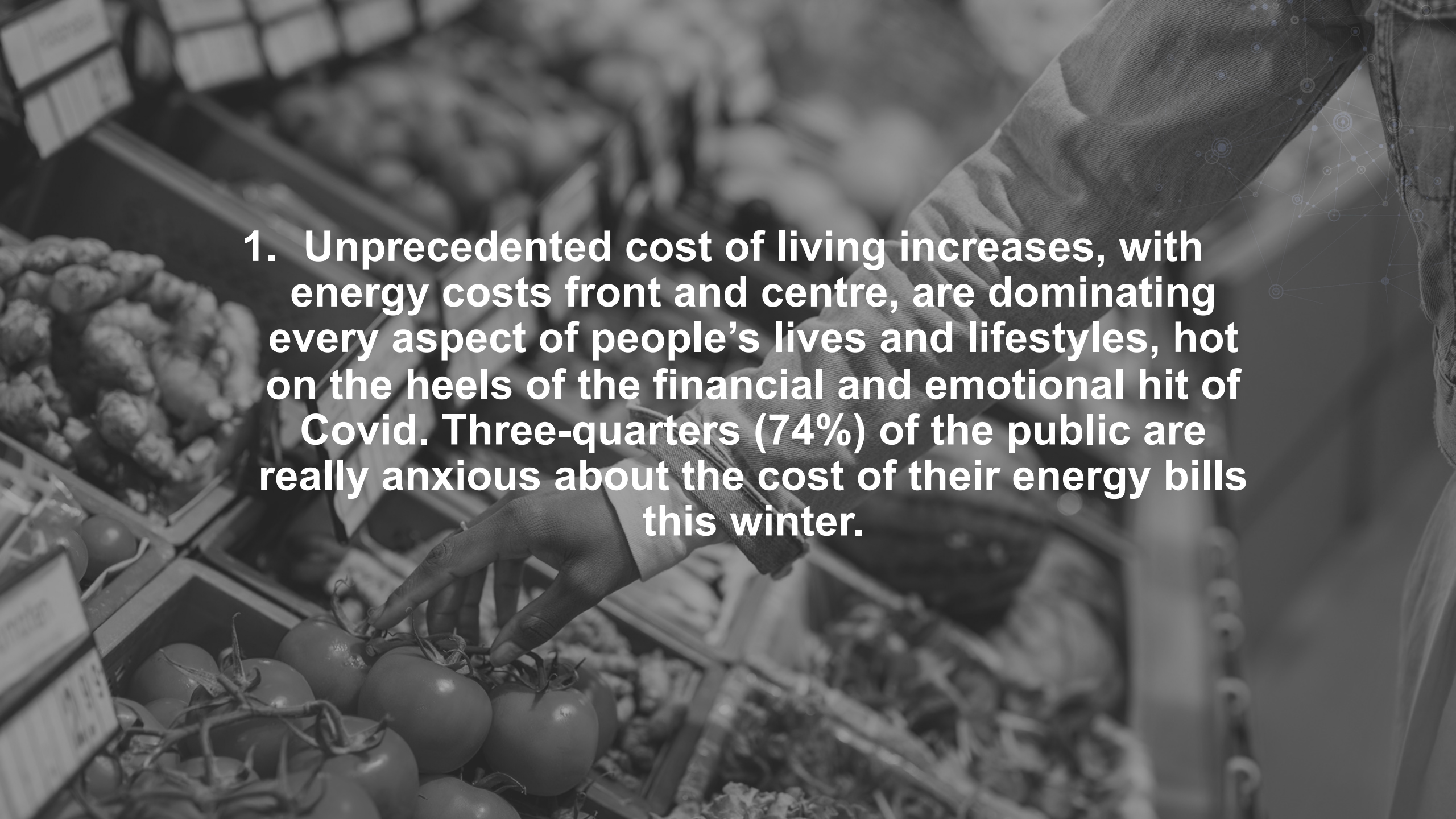
Co-creation research
May 2022

Cost of living polling
22nd – 23rd June 2022

Energy diaries polling
15th-16th August 2022

Our diarist sample of 12 households includes a mix of ages, genders, life stages, housing situations, and experiences of financial vulnerability. Participants are from North West England, the West Midlands, East England, the East Midlands and North London.

Online omnibus survey to quantify qualitative findings. Nationally-representative of the population in Great Britain by gender, age, region and socio-economic grade.



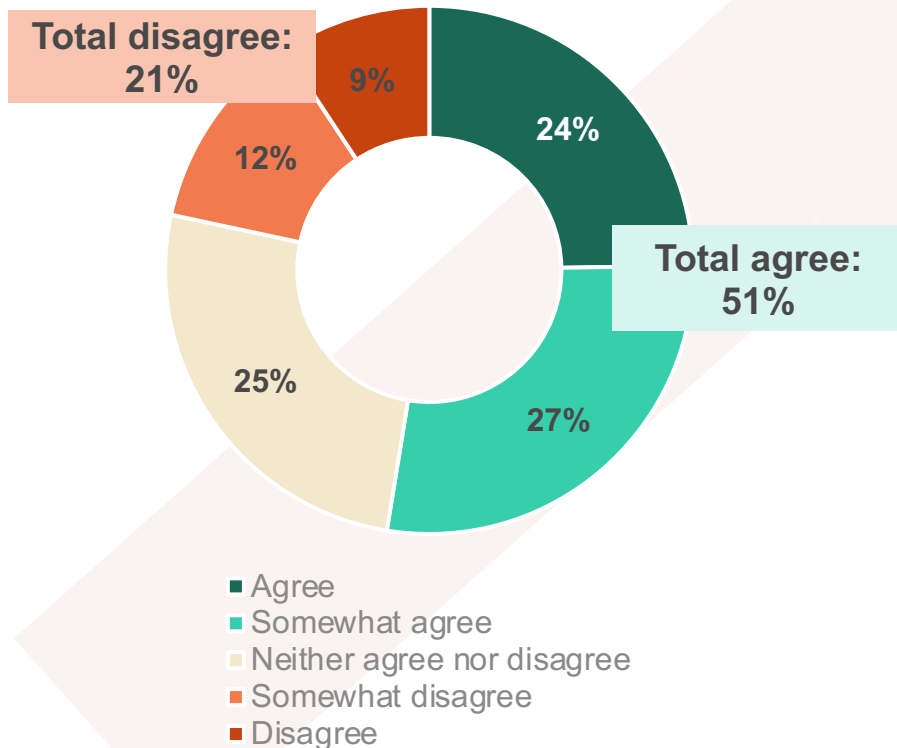
1. Unprecedented cost of living increases, with energy costs front and centre, are dominating every aspect of people's lives and lifestyles, hot on the heels of the financial and emotional hit of Covid. Three-quarters (74%) of the public are really anxious about the cost of their energy bills this winter.

Hear from our
diarists!



Gas and electricity cost increases in particular are having an impact on affording even everyday essentials

51% of the public agree that *“the increase in my energy bills is negatively impacting every single area of my life.”*



Over a third (36%) of the public are pessimistic about being able to afford the essentials in life.

Well, it's gone up £40 pound a month, so that's gone up £480 pound a year, that's £480 I could have used for something else. That could have gone towards a holiday and not a camping one - we could have gone abroad somewhere, it would've paid for the flights.

(Male, 34-54, North West)

And looking toward winter there is real concern around the double impact of colder weather and increased costs

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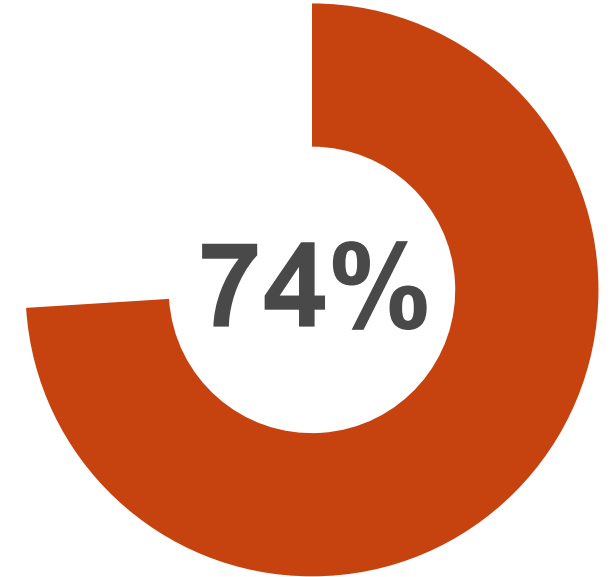
I'm feeling alright at the moment because it's summer and we're not using so much, but every time I think about the winter I worry about it, I hate the not knowing how much it will be, if it's 50% I think we'll probably be alright but what if it gets a lot worse because of the Ukraine.
(Female, 35-54, Greater London)

”

“

I did hear from a family friend that the prices are going up again in August - if that happens - I don't know how we will survive. And that might sound really silly, but I dunno how we will be able to do more than what we're doing....our lives are gonna be completely stripped back.
(Female, 21-34, West Midlands)

”



...of the public are *really* anxious about the cost of their energy bills this winter.

As a result, our participants were trying really hard to cut down their energy bills, in three main ways:



1. Reducing their energy usage



2. Cutting down on other expenditures to pay energy bills



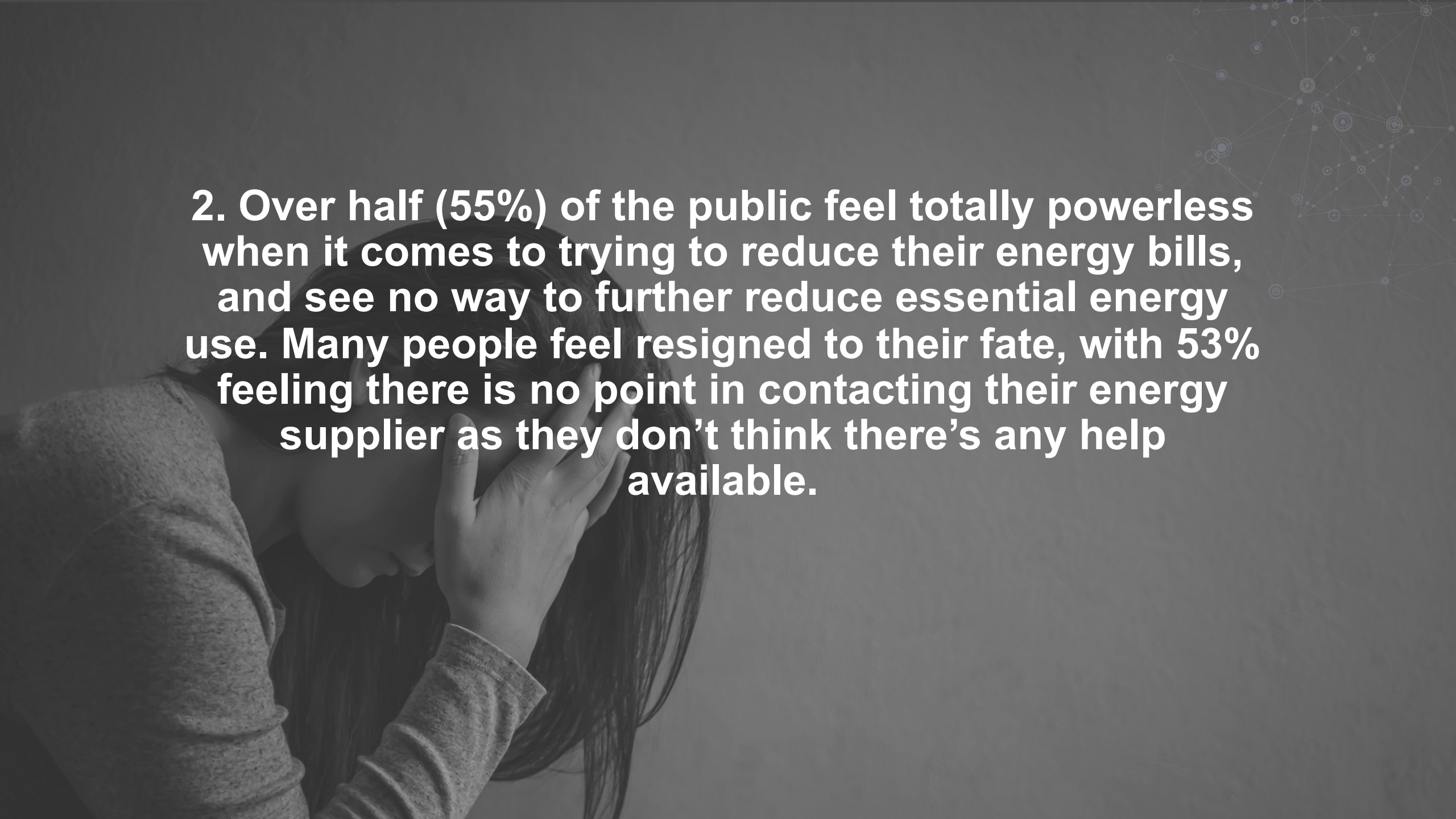
3. Spending money to save money

“

I'm economising a lot – I've got more aware of how much electricity I use and gas. I'm glad it's summer now so that I can turn the heating off [and I'm] not using lights as much. I don't cook as much as I used to – I'm trying to live off sandwiches.

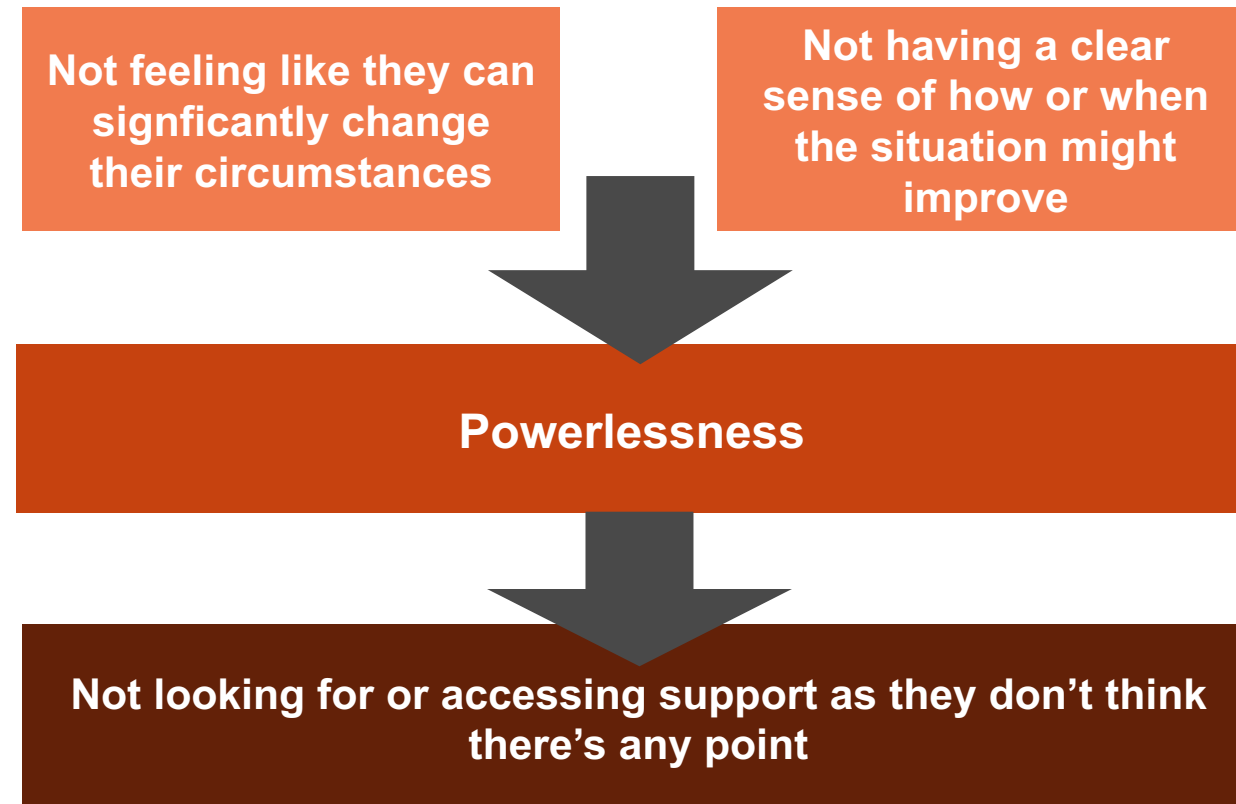
(Male, 55-69, North West)

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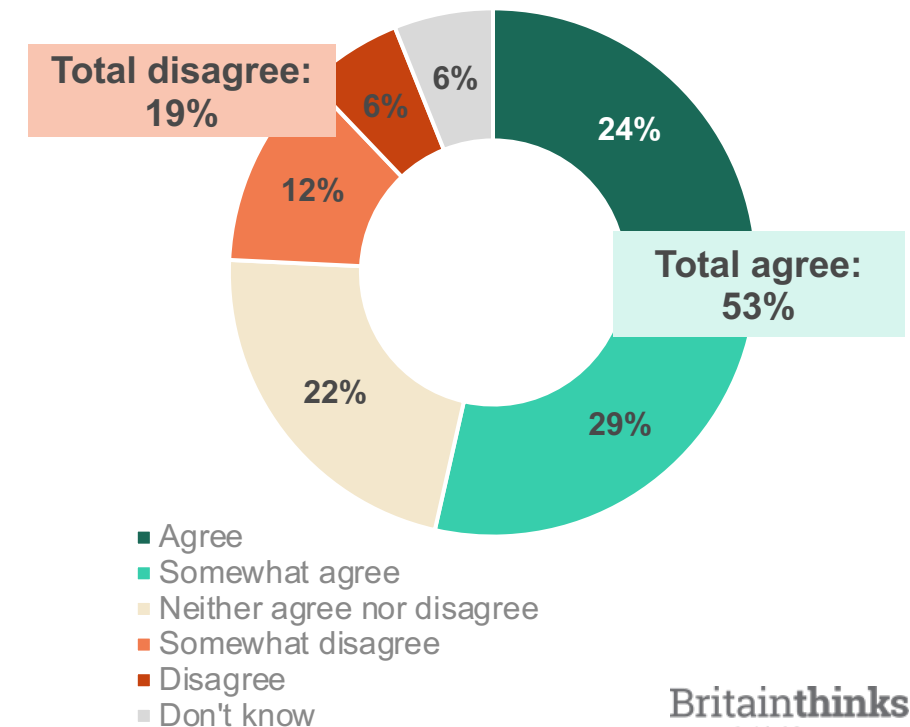


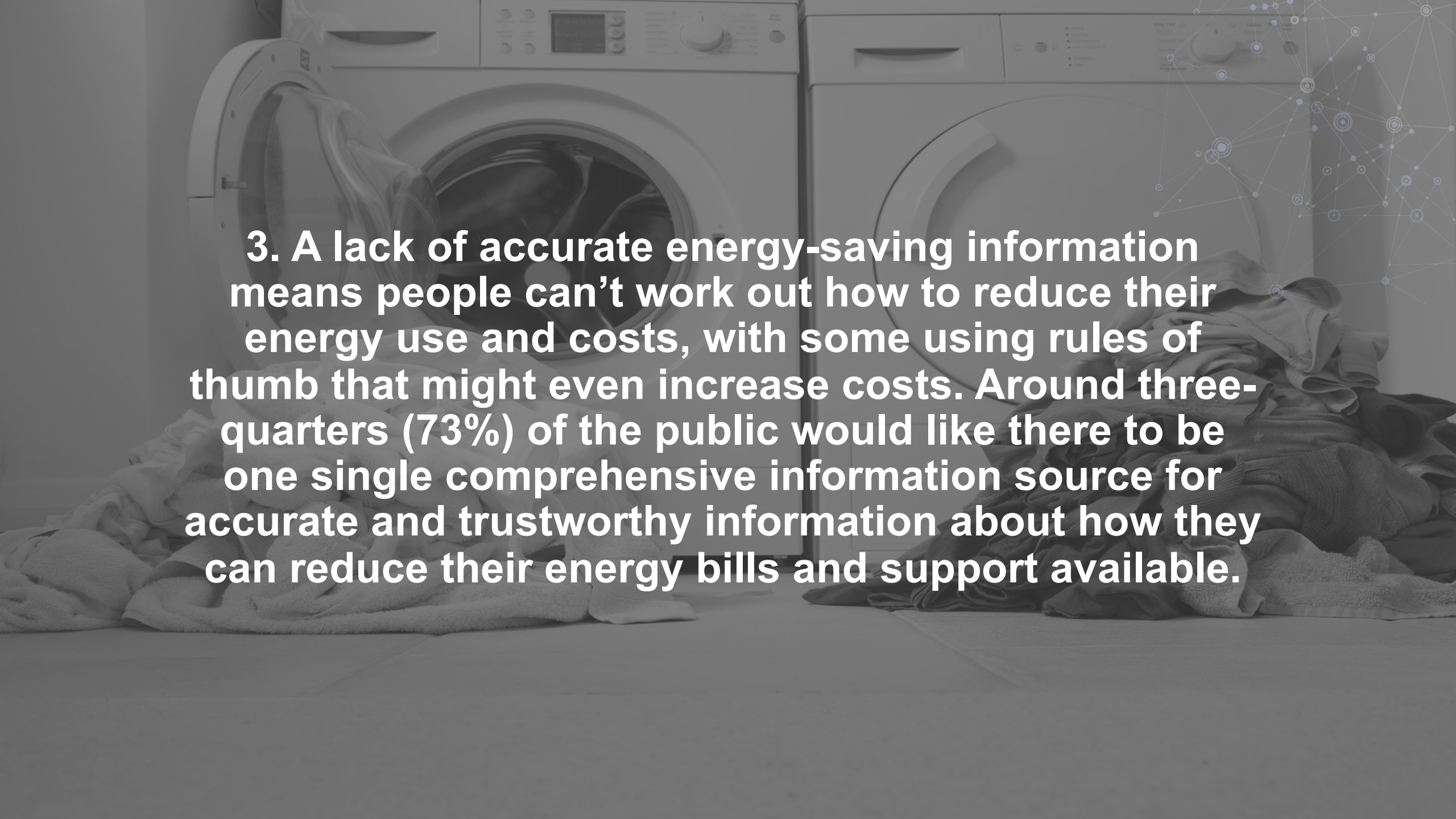
2. Over half (55%) of the public feel totally powerless when it comes to trying to reduce their energy bills, and see no way to further reduce essential energy use. Many people feel resigned to their fate, with 53% feeling there is no point in contacting their energy supplier as they don't think there's any help available.

Worryingly, this fatalism stops people from contacting energy providers as they assume no advice or financial support will be available



Over half (53%)
of the public agree that *“there is no point in contacting my energy supplier about my energy bills as I don't think there's any help available.”*





3. A lack of accurate energy-saving information means people can't work out how to reduce their energy use and costs, with some using rules of thumb that might even increase costs. Around three-quarters (73%) of the public would like there to be one single comprehensive information source for accurate and trustworthy information about how they can reduce their energy bills and support available.

Hear from our
diarists!



A lack of accurate information is stopping people making effective behaviour changes

While participants *think* they both already know a lot about how to cut down their energy use, and *think* they are already doing all they can to cut down on their energy usage and their bills, **a range of issues related to information stops people making effective changes in *practice*:**

Lack of
appliance and
systems
knowledge

Energy
consumption
uncertainty

Inaccurate rules
of thumb

“

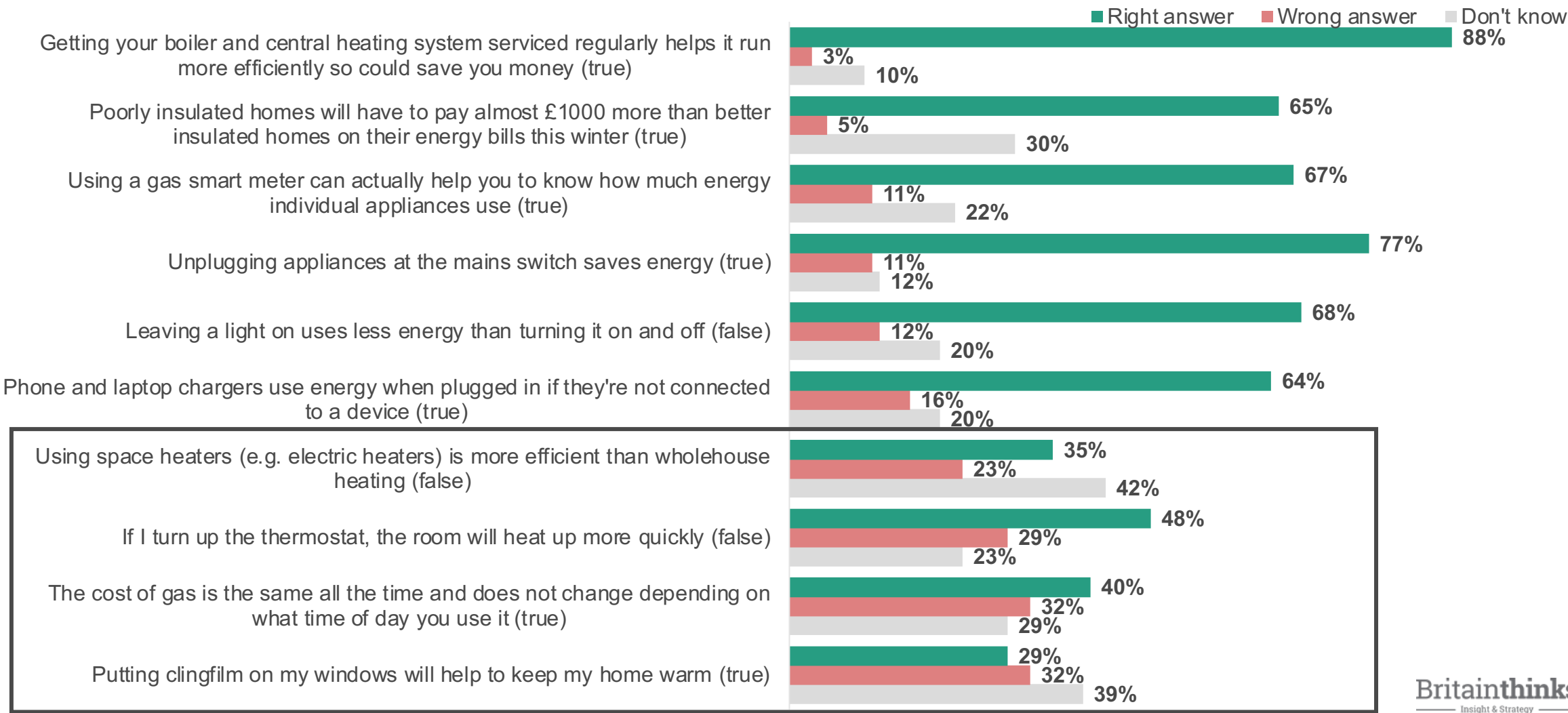
I think if we have a takeaway it might get us cheaper than using the oven. We still have our showers and we still have to use it, we charge our phones and laptops and use Alexa to listen to the news.

(Female, 21-34, East of England)

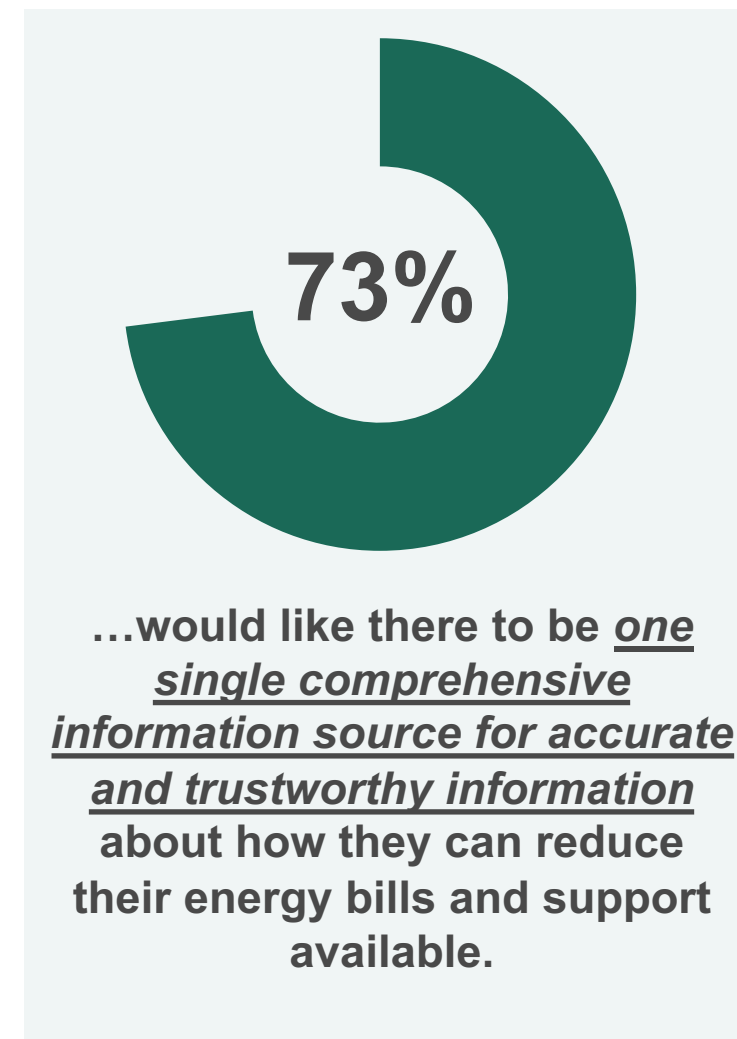
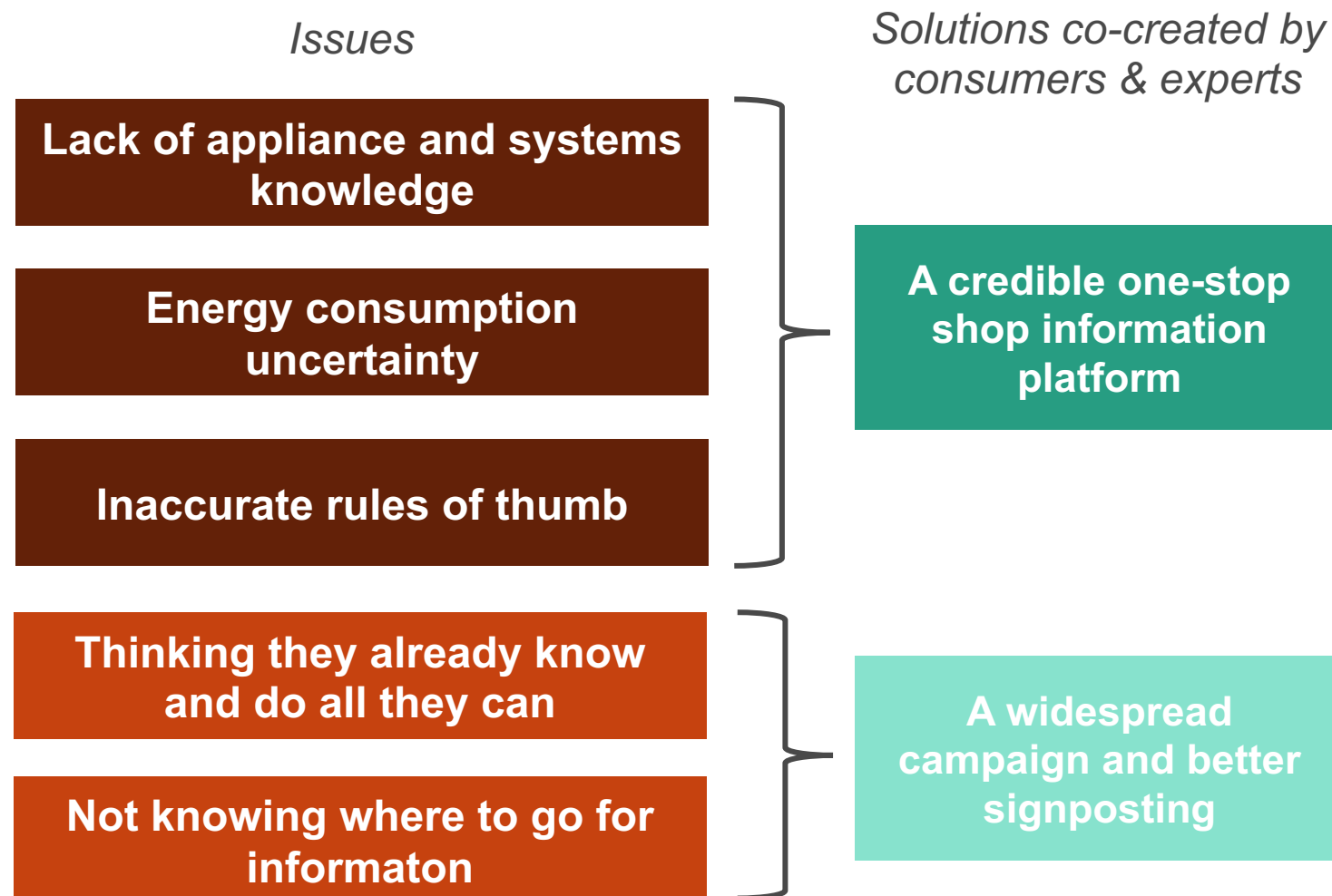
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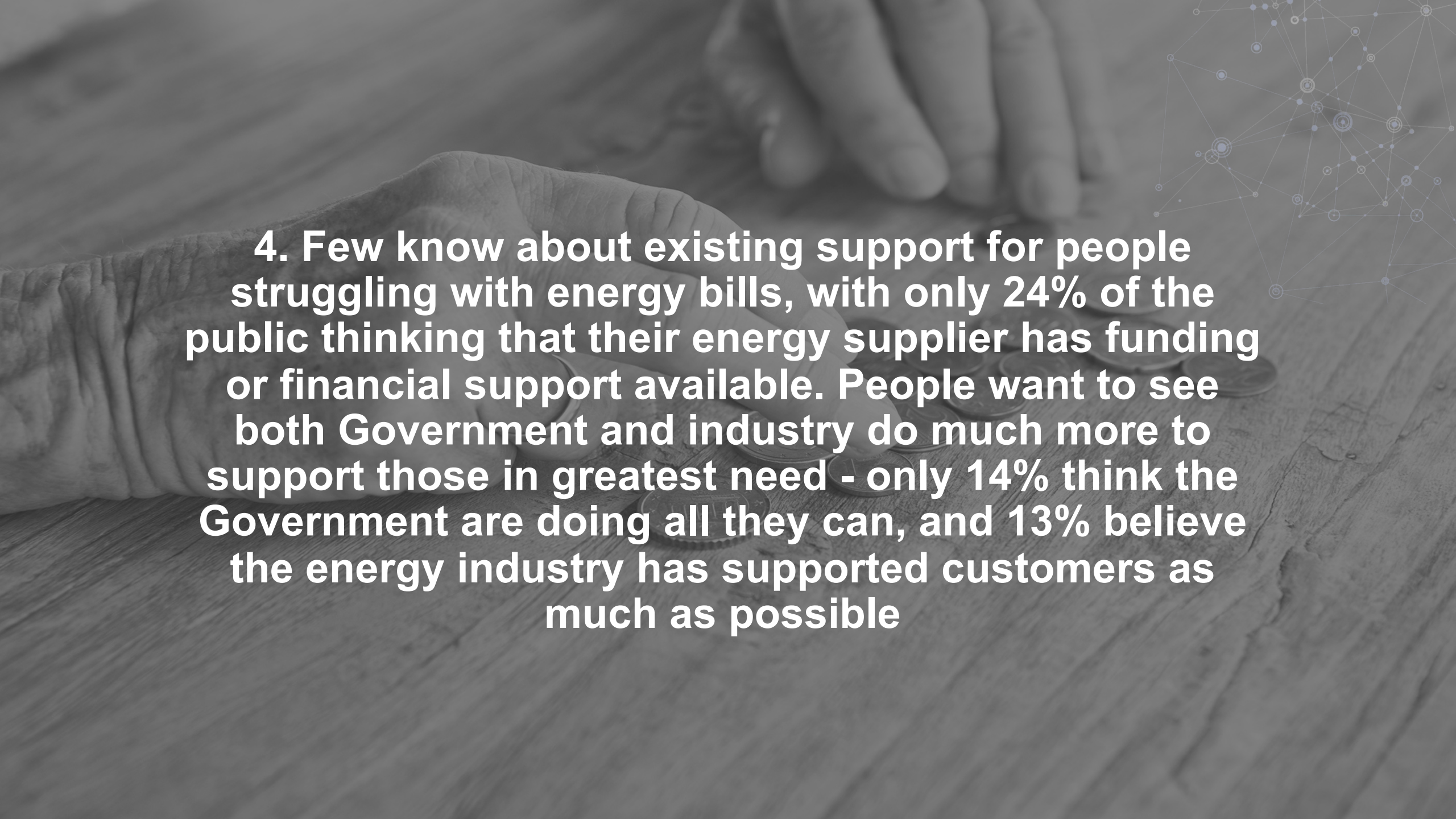
There is significant uncertainty about several energy saving behaviours

% of those who gave the right or wrong answer, when identifying statement as true or false



A one-stop shop for accurate and trustworthy information and advice alongside clear signposting would be very welcome



The background of the slide features a grayscale photograph of two hands, one older and one younger, counting coins on a wooden table. In the top right corner, there is a faint, light blue network diagram consisting of interconnected nodes and lines, resembling a molecular or digital structure.

4. Few know about existing support for people struggling with energy bills, with only 24% of the public thinking that their energy supplier has funding or financial support available. People want to see both Government and industry do much more to support those in greatest need - only 14% think the Government are doing all they can, and 13% believe the energy industry has supported customers as much as possible

There is poor awareness of support provision, including what Government and energy industry support actually amounts to

34%

of the public think the National Government have funding or financial support available for customers struggling with energy costs

Around 1 in 10 (13%)

agree that the *energy industry* has supported customers as much as possible in a very difficult situation.

“

I've heard about this [tax rebate] in the news, but I couldn't find out how it is going to work and if we can benefit from it... So as far as I understood, there would be a £200 bill reduction in October this year but I'm not sure about how to apply for it.

(Female, 21-34, East of England)

“

One of the big companies announced something like £20 billion profit. So obviously that's, that's what made me angry because I thought people are struggling to live and you are making massive amount of profits compared to last year...

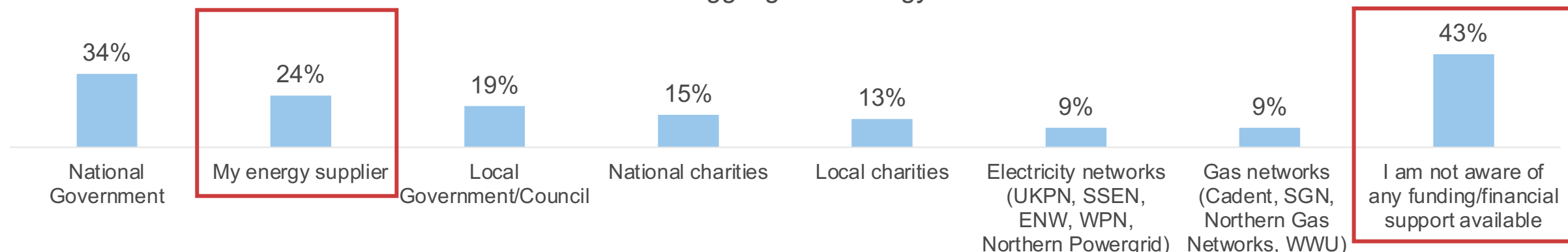
(Male, 21-34, West Midlands)

”

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Only around a quarter think their energy supplier has support available and that information from them has been helpful

Which of these, if any, have funding/financial support available for customers struggling with energy costs?



Half (51%)

of the public say they expect to hear/read about support for reducing their energy costs (including financial support and advice) from their energy supplier.

A quarter (25%)

of the public say information from their energy provider has been helpful to know what help and support is available.

People called for greater awareness-raising and clear signposting to any existing financial support

Issues

A perceived lack of Government and Industry support

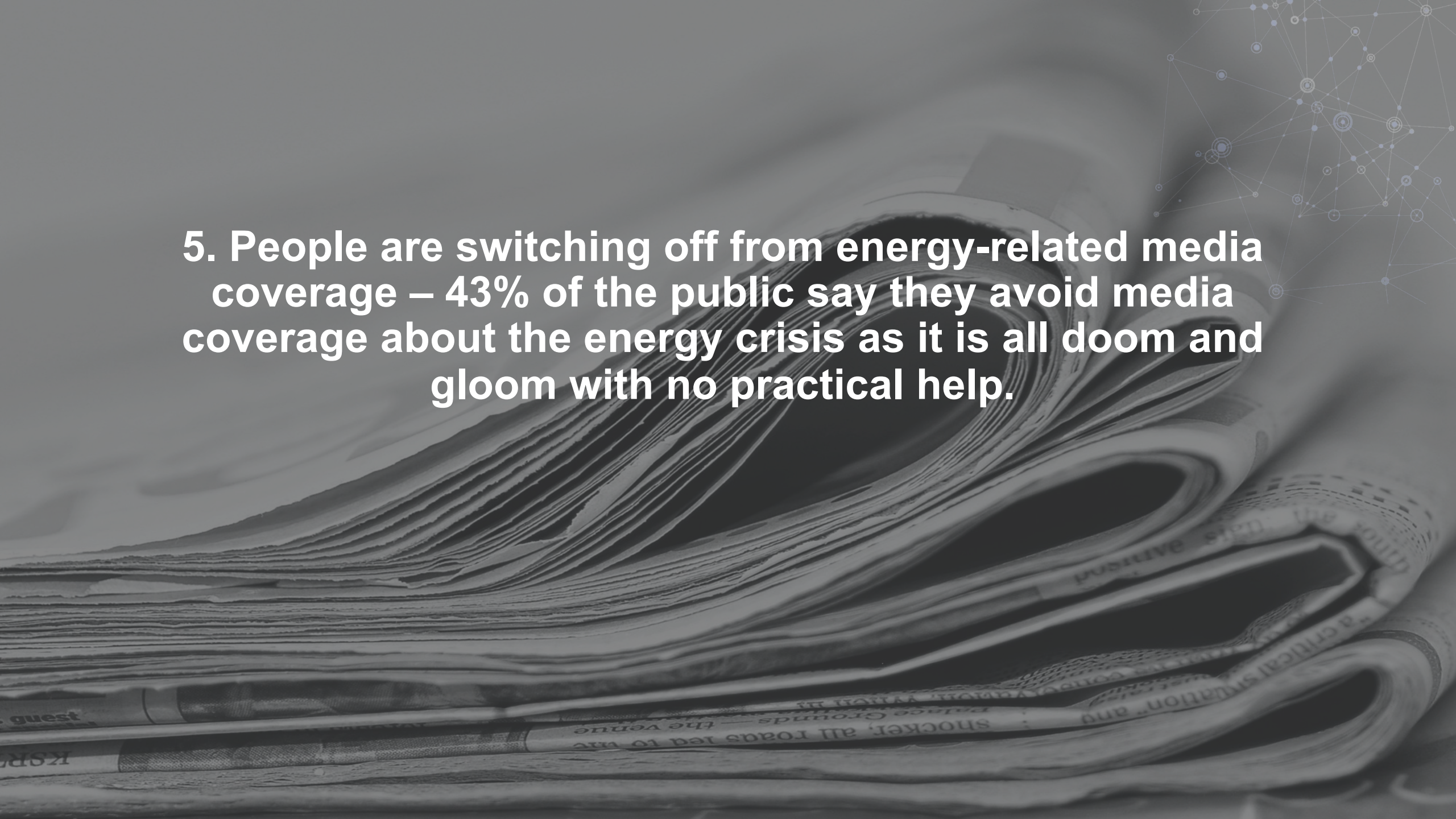
Limited awareness of existing support provision

Everybody in the same boat

Solutions co-created by consumers & experts

Increased information and financial support provision

Greater awareness-raising and clearer signposting of any sources of financial support and eligibility.

The background of the slide features a grayscale image of a large stack of newspapers, with their pages fanned out and creating a sense of depth and texture. In the top right corner, there is a faint, light blue network diagram consisting of interconnected nodes and lines, resembling a web or a data structure. The text is centered over the newspapers in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

5. People are switching off from energy-related media coverage – 43% of the public say they avoid media coverage about the energy crisis as it is all doom and gloom with no practical help.

Hear from our
diarists!

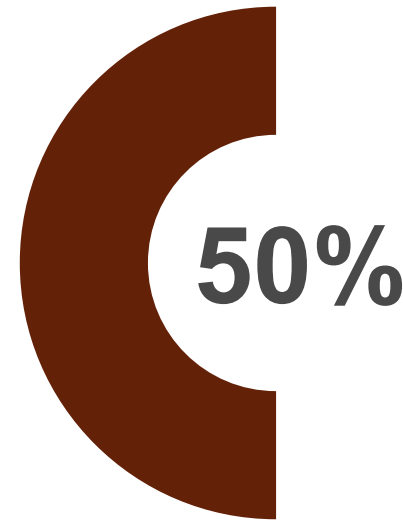


People are switching off from energy-related media coverage

Limited engagement with rising energy prices is limited, mainly driven by:

Coverage feeling overly negative and not constructive or helpful

The fact that many people are just about coping, and keen to avoid additional negativity



...of the public agree that *“the prices are going up and I just have to pay, the news is just noise.”*

“

I didn't see anything on the news or BBC. I think the panic happened at the beginning but now we just have to live with it and the prices.

(Female, 21-34, East of England)

”

2 in 5 (43%)

of the public agree that *“I avoid media coverage about the energy crisis as it is all doom and gloom with no practical help.”*

This lack of engagement could well be driven by a wider sense of crisis fatigue

2016

**Brexit vote,
Donald Trump
elected**

Trump wins US election: How world leaders have reacted
© 9 November 2016

UK votes to leave EU after dramatic night divides nation
Historic referendum vote in favour of leaving EU raises questions over futures of David Cameron and Jeremy Corbyn
Britain votes to leave EU - live

2020

**Covid: first and
second national
lockdowns**

UK coronavirus: Boris Johnson announces strict lockdown across country - as it happened



2021

**Covid: third
national
lockdown**

Another Covid Christmas: Britons to delay festive plans
Analysis: scientists say high transmission rates mean caution is critical if people are to stay safe
Coronavirus - latest updates

Covid: England's third national lockdown legally comes into force
© 6 January 2021
Coronavirus pandemic

2022

**War in Ukraine,
CoL and energy
crises, travel
chaos, climate
breakdown**

Why has Russia invaded Ukraine and what does Putin want?
By Paul Kirby
BBC News

Up to 1.5MILLION households will struggle to pay food and energy bills amid cost-of-living crisis that will plunge UK into recession, think tank warns

UK's 40C heatwave 'basically impossible' without climate change
By Georgina Rannard
BBC News Climate & Science

People are tired of hearing about crises - meaning they are more likely to disengage from communications and don't have the bandwidth for complex messages – some just want to be told what to do.

Media disengagement combined with wider crisis fatigue underlines calls for clear signposting and a single information source

Issues

Solution co-created by consumers & experts

Switching off from energy-related media

Crisis fatigue

Eye-catching, clear and simple signposting to a single comprehensive source of credible information will help to achieve reach and cut-through.

This should be provided in a variety of formats, that are tailored to diverse needs and ensure there are no barriers to access.



Conclusions and solutions

There is a clear need for *increased, improved* and *accessible* provision of advice and financial support

1

There is appetite for a credible and accessible one-stop shop information and financial support platform for accurate and trustworthy information related to energy usage and bills, including an overview of financial support available. This should go beyond self-service and be provided in a variety of formats, that are tailored to diverse accessibility needs (e.g. also F2F).

2

Alongside this, participants want to see a clear and attention-grabbing communications campaign, highlighting the existence of the information and financial support platform and how they can access it.

Given the scale, urgency and scope of the issue, there is a desire and expectation for this to be provided by a range of sources including Government, regulators, energy suppliers and providers, independent 3rd parties and charities e.g. Citizens Advice.

Any questions?



Zoom polling!



Question 1

To what extent to you agree with the following statement:

I avoid media coverage about the energy crisis as it is all doom and gloom with no practical help.



Question 2

To what extent to you agree with the following statement:

When it comes to the energy crisis, the energy industry has supported customers as much as possible in a very difficult situation.



Question 3

To what extent to you agree with the following statement:
I think the Government are doing all they can to help people during the energy crisis.



Discussion

Has your organisation invested more in providing support or advice regarding energy bills for this winter? If so, how?

How should advice, support and information be provided to the public, to make sure that it cuts through?

What more do you think the industry can do to support the public?

Thank you

For more information please contact:

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