

PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR ENERGY SOCIAL TARIFF SURGES

A huge majority of the public back the Government providing more support to vulnerable households with their energy bills. [1]

Following the Chancellor's removal of the Winter Fuel Payment from most pensioners, 67% of the public now want to see Ministers take action to boost other energy bill help.

Three quarters of the public (75%) also back the Government bringing in a social tariff to provide a discount on energy bills to those in greatest need of help.

The new polling by Opinium for the Warm This Winter campaign reveals that support for a social tariff has surged from 57% of the public backing the move in a similar poll published before the General Election.

In the new figures, while 12% don't know if they back the move, 13% oppose the plan.

A social tariff offers lasting protection to those who depend on heating and electricity the most for their health and well-being, reducing the unit cost they pay and shielding them from volatile and persistently high energy costs.

In the run-up to the 2024 election, the Labour Party committed to deliver a "fairer energy system for everyone" and over half (55%) of Labour voters said that this made them more likely to vote for the party in July's election. [2]

But after many pensioners have now seen their winter fuel payments removed, 78% of the public called for a social tariff to be made available to older people.

86% felt that those who are dependent on powered medical equipment in order to stay healthy at home (e.g. dialysis machines, oxygen concentrators, artificial ventilators) or rely on energy to power equipment (e.g. charge wheelchairs, run fridges for medicines) should get the tariff.

Similar high levels of support were found for the social tariff going to those who have respiratory diseases (81%), have cardiovascular disease (77%), disabilities (76%), are financially vulnerable (72%) or are at risk from not using energy due to money worries (69%).

As in previous polling, the public backed the social tariff being paid for by the energy industry (producers, networks and suppliers). There was also support for the cost being split between industry and general taxation.

The most recent energy industry profits tracker shows that over [£457bn in profits](#) have been generated by firms since the start of the energy bills crisis. Over £1,200 per household in profit has been generated by network operators and transmission firms alone. [3]

There was almost no support for it being fully funded by spreading the costs across everyone else's energy bills, which is usually what happens with support schemes at present.

Warm This Winter campaign manager, Caroline Simpson, commented:

"The public believe that a social tariff must be implemented and this needs to be done as soon as possible to avoid more scenes of vulnerable people living in cold damp homes every winter. Hard-pressed bill payers also want to see this programme paid for by energy industry profits."

"Most also agree the only way to bring down everyone's bills in the long term is to help households reduce their energy use, by insulating and ventilating the UK's housing, which is some of the leakiest in Europe. But in the meantime we must ensure we protect the most vulnerable people in our society from the continuing high cost of energy driven by volatile gas prices."

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Simon Francis, coordinator of the End Fuel Poverty Coalition commented:

"This autumn is being dominated by the Chancellor's cold hearted decision to remove Winter Fuel Payments from older people which we know will [hit those with disabilities and pre-existing health conditions](#) very hard indeed.

"But not only is this the wrong policy from a [public health](#) perspective, it also flies against popular opinion.

"Protecting vulnerable consumers from energy prices that remain way above 2021 levels is a popular and easy to implement policy. The Government must now prioritise delivering a social tariff while its longer term reforms to boost renewables and its Warm Homes Plan have the time needed to deliver results.

"The public would support this being paid for by the whole energy industry. Producers, transmission firms, network operators, market traders, suppliers and their supply chains could all chip in through their profits to make this happen."

David Southgate, policy manager at disability equality charity Scope, said:

"It's clear there is widespread support for making energy bills much fairer for disabled people. The government must listen.

"Life costs a lot more when you're disabled. Disabled people have to spend more of their income on energy and continually face eye-watering bills. For charging vital equipment like wheelchairs, hoists and breathing equipment, or for more heating to stay warm and well.

“Disabled households are now beyond breaking point. They have cut back everything they can and are increasingly forced into unmanageable debt.

“That's why Scope continues to call for discounted bills for disabled people. This would finally put an end to the impossible situation millions of disabled people face trying to make ends meet.”

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[1] Opinium conducted an online survey of 2,014 nationally and politically representative UK adults between 7th and 8th October 2024

[2] 32% of 2024 Labour voters said it made no difference to their vote or they didn't know. 7% said it made them less likely to vote Labour, but did so anyway.

[3] Data as at 3 September 2024. Researchers examined the declared profits of the 20 firms the End Fuel Poverty Coalition is most asked to comment on. This sample of the industry ranges from energy producers (such as Equinor and Shell) through to the firms that control our energy grid (such as National Grid, UK Power Networks and Cadent) as well as suppliers (such as British Gas). It does not include supply chains nor market trading firms.