

# Ofgem Consumer Survey 2021

Tracking data and insights into consumer engagement with the energy market

## Introduction from Ofgem

Ofgem is Great Britain's independent energy regulator. Since 2014 we have undertaken a nationally representative survey of domestic energy consumers in Great Britain to measure consumer engagement with energy and their attitudes towards topical energy issues. Our consumer surveys are an important source of insight on consumers' attitudes, perceptions, behaviours and experiences, providing evidence to underpin Ofgem's policy work.

The 2021 survey, of over 4000 GB energy consumers covers a broad range of topics including consumer engagement with energy, attitudes and behaviours relating to decarbonisation. This report, prepared by Ipsos, focuses on the state of consumer engagement in the energy market in 2021.

**Fieldwork was conducted from 19th August to 17th September 2021, before the global energy crisis.**

Consumer engagement is central to driving competition between market providers to win and retain consumers. This survey helps Ofgem understand which consumers are and aren't engaging with energy and how engagement is changing over time.

# Summary of key findings (1)



## Overall engagement

Engagement in the energy market remains stable since 2020 with 3 in 5 consumers (63%) engaging in the past 12 months. Within this there is a small but significant decline in supplier switching. As per previous years, the majority of consumers who switch supplier are repeat switchers rather than first time switchers.

## Who is and isn't engaging?

Similar consumer profiles as in 2020 are more likely than average to have engaged: consumers aged 65+, ABC1s and owner occupiers (though notably engagement amongst those aged 65+ has declined since 2020). Low carbon technology adopters also tend to be more likely to have engaged in the energy market. Vulnerable consumers remain less likely than average to have engaged in the energy market in the past 12 months. Disengagement appears to have grown amongst carers, prepayment meter customers and those in arrears on their bills.

## Routes to engagement, perceptions and barriers

Online price comparison sites remain the main route used by those engaging in the energy market. While awareness of energy scanning services and auto switching services are growing, sign-up rates remain lower. The most common reason for not engaging is satisfaction with existing supplier, although fewer consumers say they did not engage due to good service from their supplier compared to 2020. Low confidence comparing energy deals and heightened perceptions of the risks of engaging are once again reported barriers for disengaged consumers.

# Summary of key findings (2)

## What tariffs are consumers on?

Almost 7 in 10 (68%) of consumers report being on fixed tariffs. 3 in 10 (27%) say they are on a green tariff and few (3%) on a time of use tariff. Likelihood to switch to other types of tariffs is mixed: though higher amongst those who have switched before and users of low carbon technologies or electric vehicles.

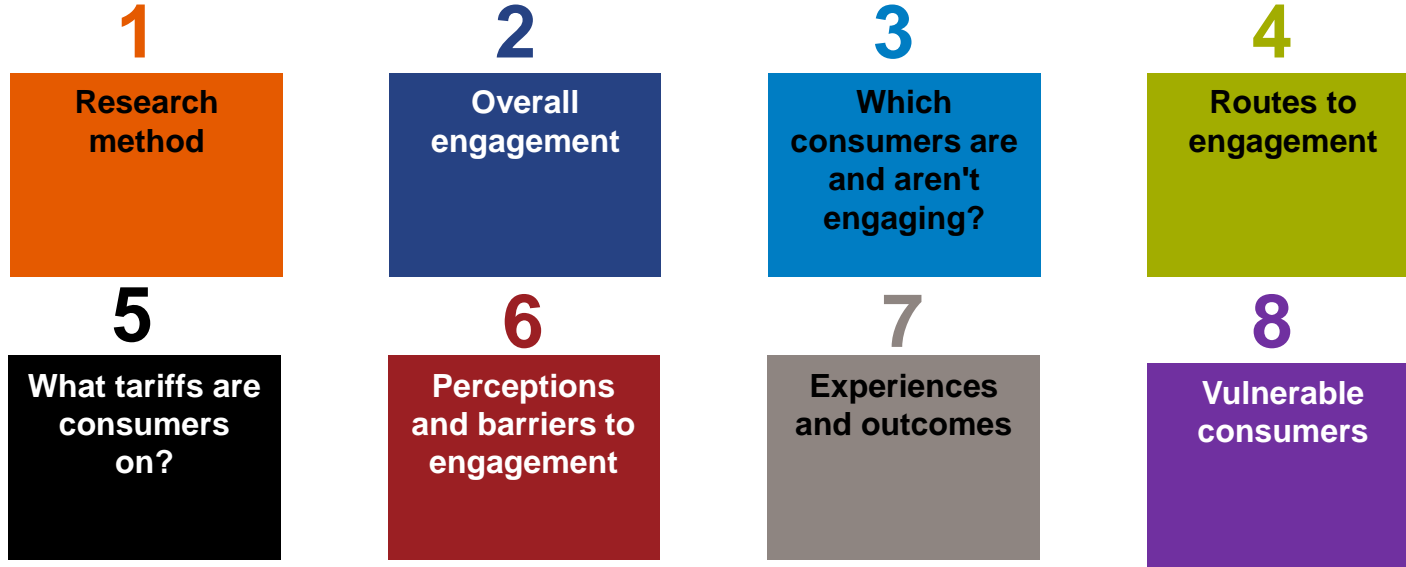
## Experiences and outcomes

As in 2020, energy companies are less likely to be trusted than banks/building societies and internet/broadband suppliers. Disengaged consumers are less likely to trust energy suppliers in general, and their own supplier specifically. Lack of trust may inhibit market engagement, though for those disengaged high levels of trust may also increase inertia.

## Vulnerable consumers

Vulnerable consumers remain significantly less likely than other consumers to have engaged in the energy market. Gaps do not appear to be closing and for some groups have widened since 2020. Some of the lowest engagement levels are among prepayment meters consumers and consumers who are financially constrained or in financial difficulty. This group are more likely to perceive cost-related risks of switching. They are also significantly more likely to report being financially affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, perhaps compounding these worries around cost.

# How this report is structured:



For a detailed breakdown of the 2021 survey results please refer to the data tables published alongside this report.

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# Research method

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# Research method

For a full description of the 2021 survey methodology and objectives, please refer to the technical report, available here: [Consumer Survey 2021 | Ofgem](#).

Target sample:

**GB consumers with mains gas and/or electricity and full or shared responsibility for energy bills**

Data collection: online, sampled from a blend of panels

**4,037\*** online interviews in 2021

(2020: 4608; 2019: 4001; 2018: 4064; 2017: 4,001; 2016: 5,956; 2015: 5,934; 2014: 6,151)

NB 2020 sample size was larger than recent waves due to re-fielding to include respondents aged 65+ in the sample.

Interviews carried out in all Government Office Regions in **England, and in Scotland and Wales**

Quotas on age, gender, social grade and working status, to reflect a **nationally representative sample of bill payers/partners**

Data weighted to align with profiles from previous years

**NB The 2020 and 2021 waves were both conducted online, while previous waves were completed face to face. Significant differences are shown between 2020 and 2021 results, but no direct comparisons are made between 2020 and previous years' results due to mode effects**

**Fieldwork carried out between 19<sup>th</sup> August – 17<sup>th</sup> September**  
2021 Average interview length = 18 minutes

## Notes on reading this report – impacts of the energy crisis



Fieldwork in 2021 was completed **before the impacts of the energy crisis** – including the failure of several suppliers at the end of September 2021 and increases to the price cap – affected the GB energy market.

Therefore, the findings capture consumers' attitudes and behaviours prior to this event and **cannot comment on the impact of the crisis on future attitudes or behaviours.**

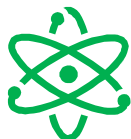


# Notes on reading this report – impacts of the change in method and the COVID-19 pandemic



Data from 2021 is **compared to 2020 data only** as both waves were conducted online following the method change in 2020. They are not compared to previous years where the survey was conducted face to face as the data is not strictly comparable.

At the time fieldwork was conducted, the UK national COVID lockdowns had finished and – unlike in 2020 – many national COVID restrictions had been lifted.



- It is anticipated that the COVID pandemic and lockdowns, and associated economic impacts, may have continued to affect responses to the survey in 2021 to some degree.
- While external data on switching levels can be used to understand whether/how the pandemic may have impacted on switching measures in the survey, there is no other tracking data to triangulate other measures, and the extent of the impact cannot be known.

## Conventions throughout report (1)

Significant differences are clearly marked throughout the presentation. All marked changes over time and subgroup differences have been tested at the 95% confidence level.

Changes between subgroups are represented by black up/down arrows  $\uparrow\downarrow$ ; significant differences between trended data are represented by up/down triangles  $\blacktriangle\blacktriangledown$   
(NB: 2020 and 2021 data is not sig tested vs 2019 due to mode changes).

Some figures have been rounded up / down, and not all categories are shown, so sums will not always total 100 percent.

## Conventions throughout report (2)

### Terminology

- P12M engaged – switched supplier, tariff, or compared in the past 12 months
- P12M disengaged – none of the above actions in the past 12 months
- First time switchers – switched supplier for the first time in the past 12 months
- P12M switchers – switched supplier or tariff in past 12 months
- P12M supplier switchers – switched supplier in the past 12 months
- P12M tariff switchers – switched tariff in the past 12 months
- P12M comparers – compared supplier / tariff in the past 12 months (but not switched)

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# Overall engagement

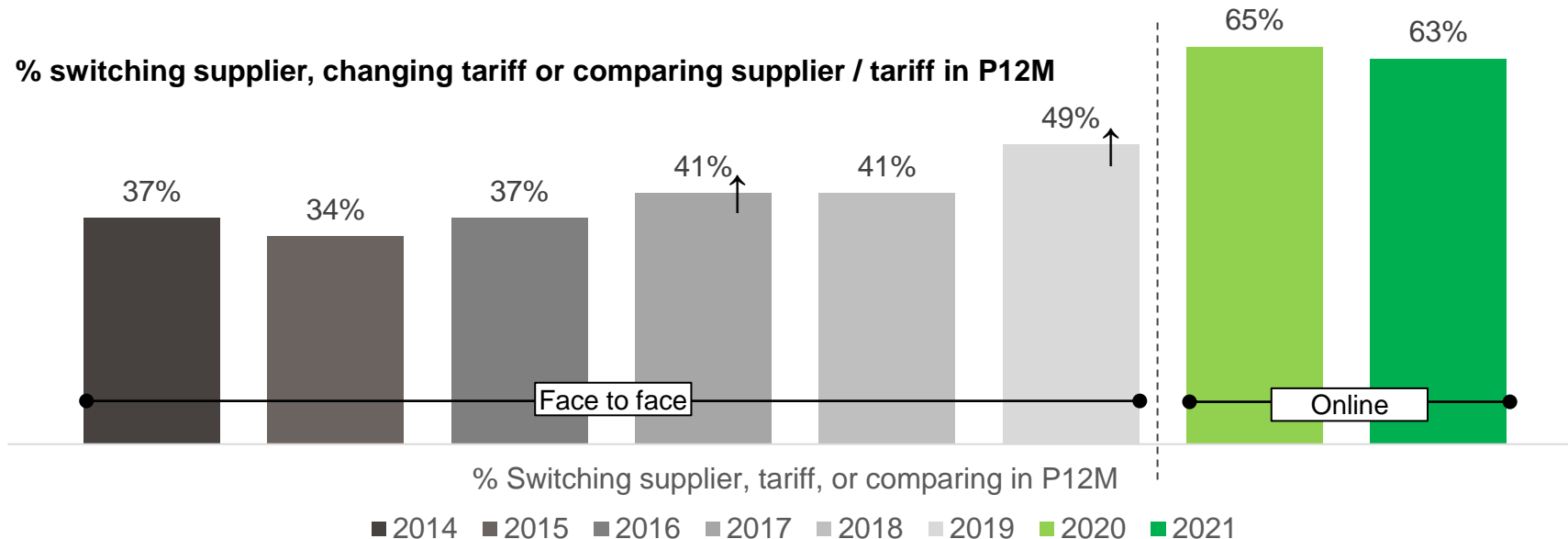
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# In 2021, 3 in 5 say they have engaged in the energy market



This is in line with 2020, with engagement levels increasing over time. Comparisons pre-2020 should be treated with caution due to the change in research mode which led to a jump in engagement in 2020<sup>1</sup>

% switching supplier, changing tariff or comparing supplier / tariff in P12M

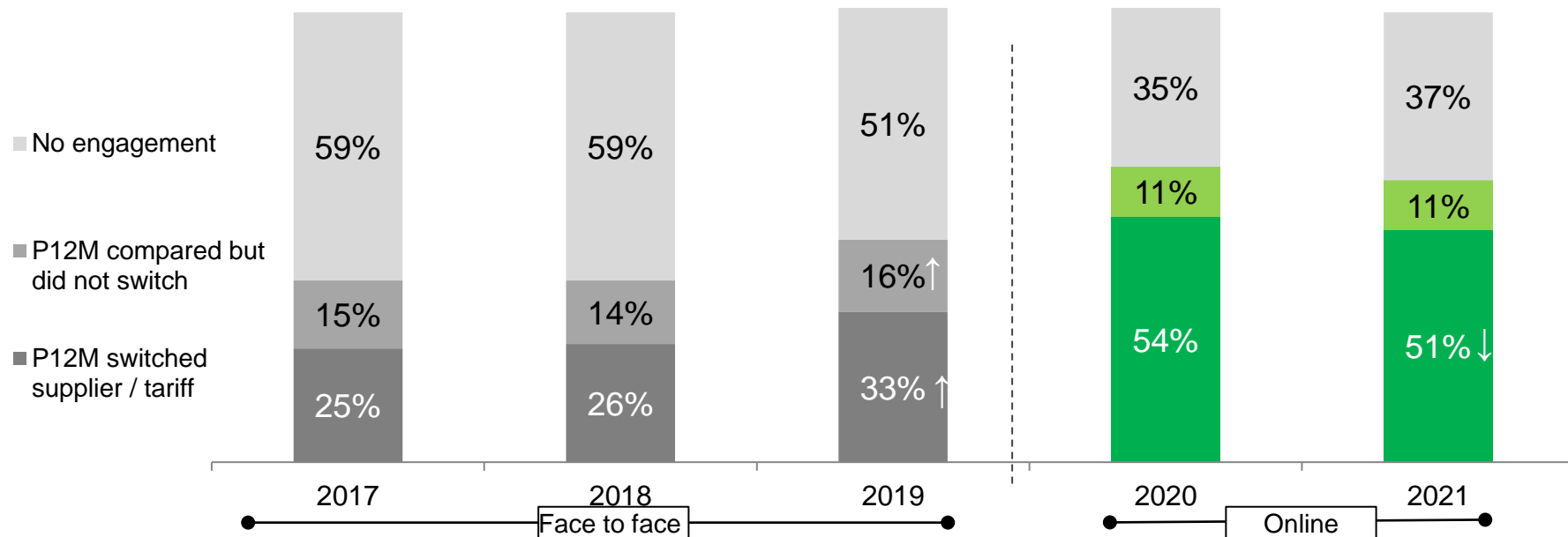


Online: QCOMPARE 2: Have you or your household compared energy deals in the past 12 months to see if you could switch to a different supplier or tariff? QENGAGE2: And which, if any, of these have you or your household done in the past 12 months? Base: Total 2021 (4037), Total 2020 (4608). Face to face: Q138/139. When did you last switch supplier? WhnSG/E. When did you last switch tariff? ChngG/E. Thinking about your supply, which if any of these have you done in the past 12 months? Base: Total 2019 (4001); Total 2018 (4064), Total 2017 (4001); Total 2016 (5956), Total 2015 (5934), Total 2014 (6151) ↑↓ indicate significant change between waves: CAUTION: Online waves have not been significance tested against face to face waves prior to 2020 due to change in survey mode in 2020. Source: Ofgem/Ipsos Consumer Survey 2021

<sup>1</sup> 2020 and 2021 figures are not directly comparable with previous years because the survey method changed from face-to-face to online. Consumers who answer online surveys tend to be more engaged and inclined to switch energy deals. They also show greater confidence in their ability to select an energy deal. This is likely to explain a large part of the apparent increase in engagement between 2019 and 2020.

## How have consumers engaged?

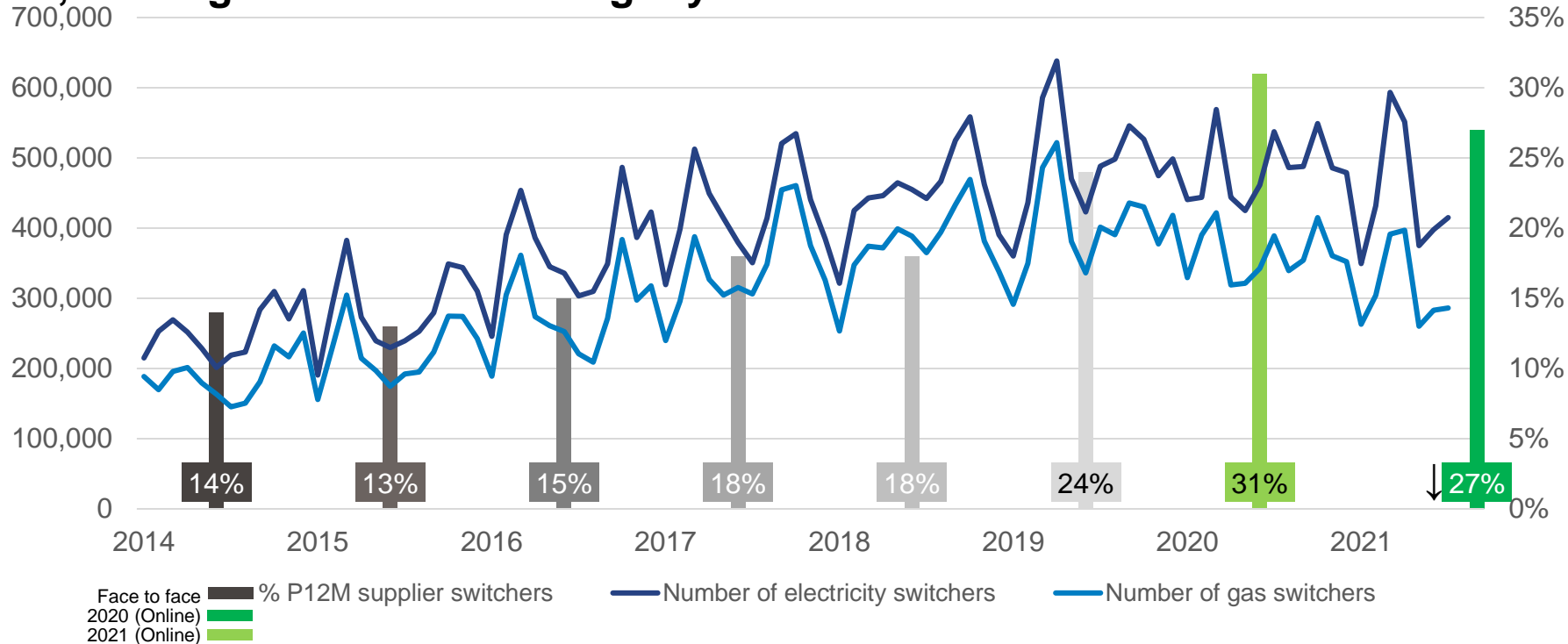
While engagement in 2021 has remained stable, there has been a slight drop in the proportion switching supplier or tariff versus 2020 – driven by a fall in supplier switching.



Online: QCOMPARE 2: Have you or your household compared energy deals in the past 12 months to see if you could switch to a different supplier or tariff? QENGAGE2: And which, if any, of these have you or your household done in the past 12 months? Base: Total 2021 (4037), Total 2020 (4608). Face to face: Q138/139. When did you last switch supplier? WhnSG/E. When did you last switch tariff? ChngG/E. Thinking about your supply, which if any of these have you done in the past 12 months? Base: Total 2019 (4001); Total 2018 (4064), Total 2017 (4001); Total 2016 (5956), Total 2015 (5934), Total 2014 (6151) ↑↓ indicate significant change between waves. CAUTION: Online waves have not been significance tested against face to face waves due to change in survey mode in 2020. Source: Ofgem/Ipsos Consumer Survey 2021

The 2020 and 2021 figures are not directly comparable with previous years because the main survey method changed from face-to-face to an online survey. Consumers who answer online surveys tend to be more engaged with the market and inclined to switch energy deals. They also show greater confidence in their ability to select an energy deal. This is likely to explain a large part of the apparent increase in engagement between 2019 and 2020.

# Levels of supplier switching reflect Ofgem's own switching data, although this has fallen slightly in 2021



Online: QENGAGE2: And which, if any, of these have you or your household done in the past 12 months? Base: Total 2021 (4037), Total 2020 (4608). Base: Total 2019 (4001); Total 2018 (4064), Total 2017 (4001), Total 2016 (5956); Total 2015 (5934); Total 2014 (6151). Actual switching data from [Ofgem retail market indicators](#) available only until July 2021. ↑↓ indicate significant change between waves: CAUTION: Online waves have not been significance tested against face-to-face waves due to change in survey mode in 2020. Source: Ofgem/Ipsos Consumer Survey 2021

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Which consumers are and aren't engaging?

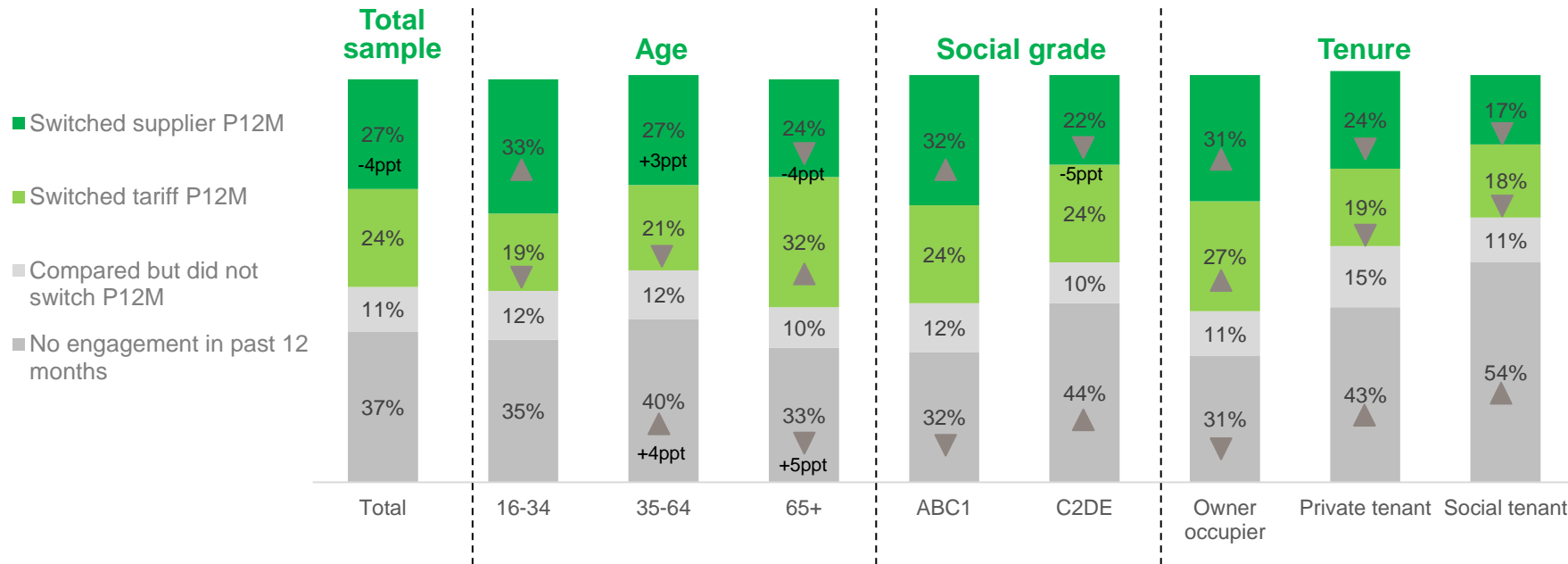
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# Who's engaging (or not)? – demographic groups



As seen in 2020, levels of engagement in the energy market in the past 12 months were lower among C2DE households and tenants (particularly social tenants). While consumers aged 65+ were more likely than average to have engaged in the market at all, they were less likely to have switched supplier; instead switching tariff but staying with the same supplier.

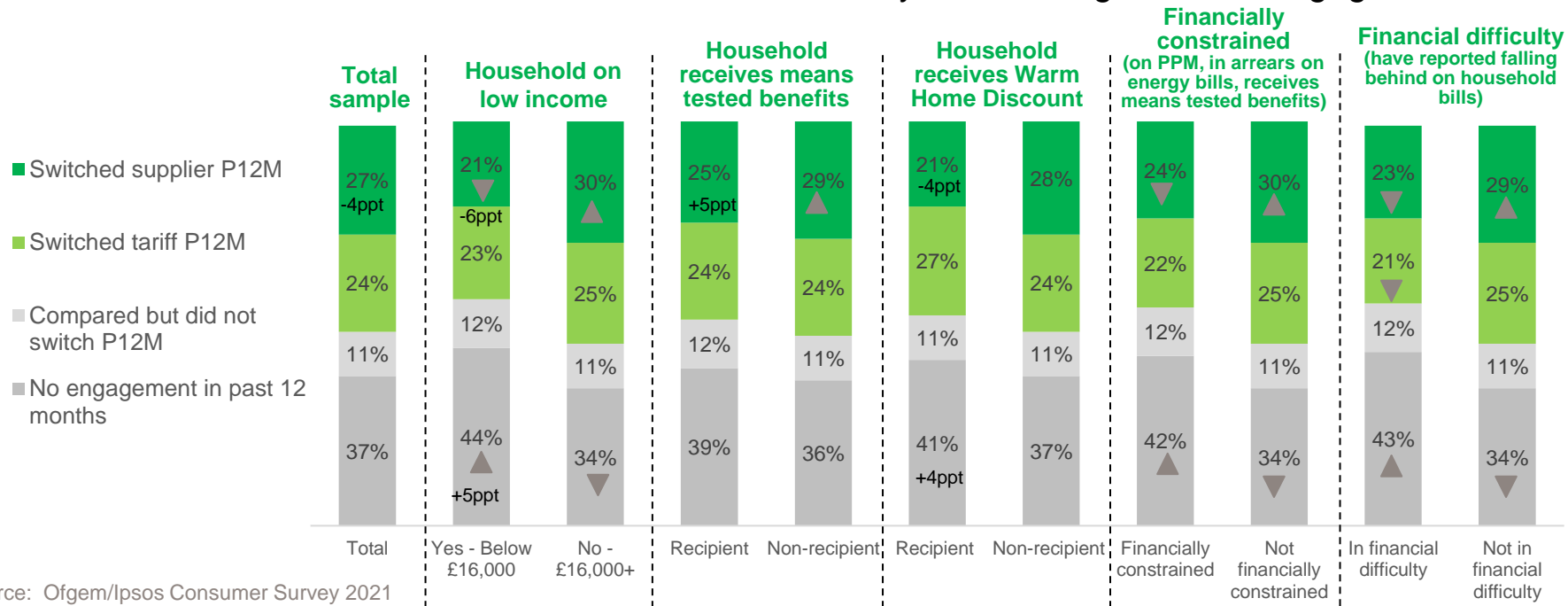


Base: 2021: Total (4037), Age 16-34 (780), 35-64 (2,052), 65+ (1,205), Social grade ABC1 (3,055), C2DE (982), Owner occupiers (2853), Private tenants (556), Social tenants (585). ▲ ▼ indicate significant differences between sub-group and average. +/- on chart show significant differences since 2020.

# Who's engaging (or not)? – income/financial profile



Levels of engagement were also low and falling amongst households on low incomes or who were experiencing financial constraints or financial difficulties. However, households receiving means tested benefits and/or Warm Homes Discounts were no less likely than average to have engaged.



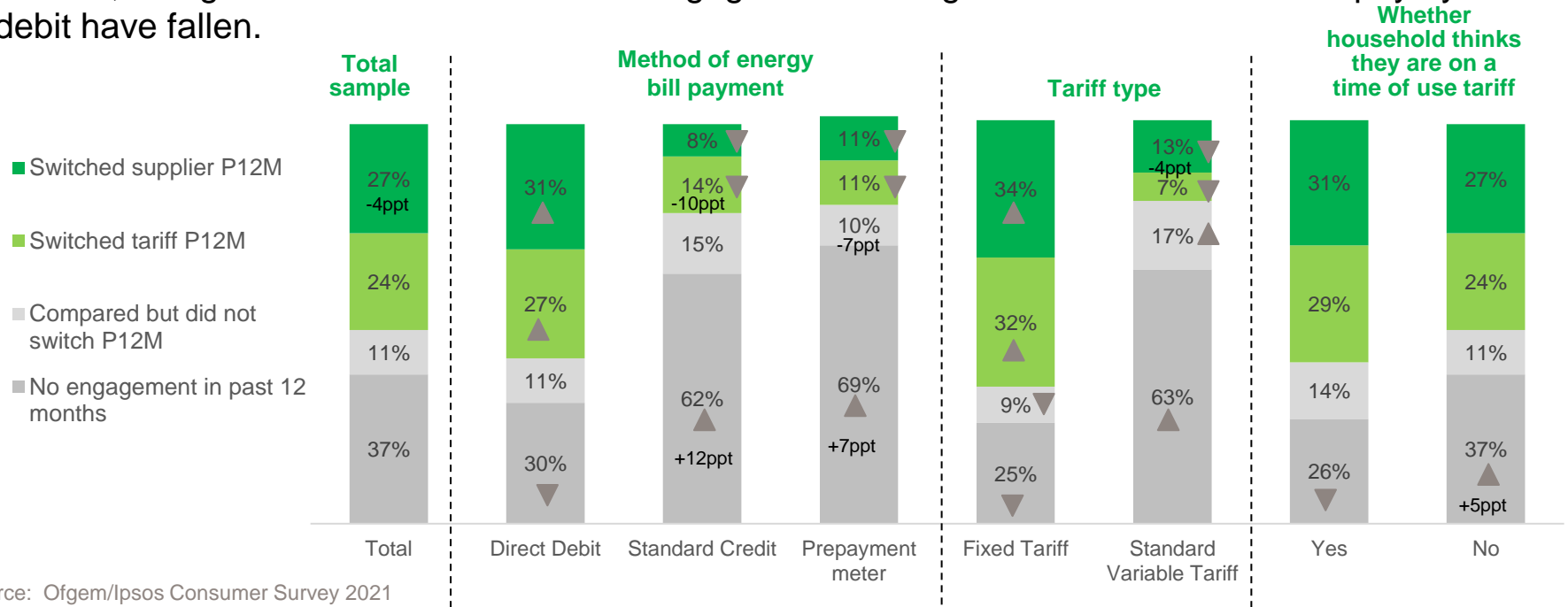
Source: Ofgem/Ipsos Consumer Survey 2021

Base: 2021: Total (4037), Households on annual income of < £16K (958), Households on income of £16K+ (2884), Households in receipt of means tested benefits (1,276), Non-recipients (2,761), Households in receipt of Warm Homes Discount (313), Non-recipients (3,724), Financially constrained (1,497), Not financially constrained (2,540), In financial difficulty (652), Not in financial difficulty (2,939) ▲ ▼ indicate significant differences between sub-group and average. +/- on chart show significant differences since 2020.

# Who's engaging (or not)? – energy characteristics



Levels of engagement were significantly lower amongst consumers who pay energy bills by standard credit or PPM, and those who think their household is on a fixed tariff. Patterns were similar in 2020, though it is notable that levels of engagement amongst customers who do not pay by direct debit have fallen.



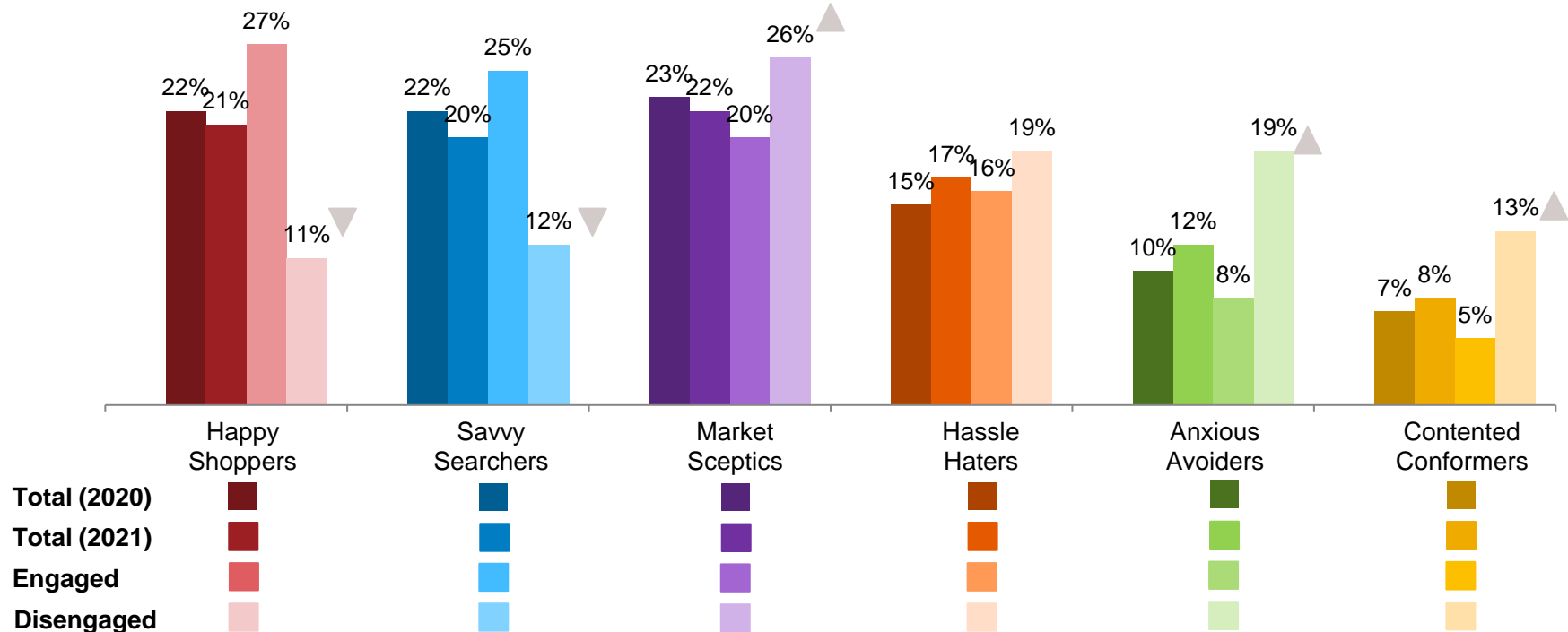
Source: Ofgem/Ipsos Consumer Survey 2021

Base: 2021: Total (4037), Pay by direct debit (3,428), Standard Credit (235), PPM (339), Fixed tariff (2,787) Standard variable tariff (1,250), Household thinks they are on a time of use tariff (116), Does not (3,921) NB Many participants were confused as to whether their household was on a time of use tariff, so results should be treated as indicative. ▲ ▼ indicate significant differences between sub-group and average, +/- on chart shows significant differences since 2020

# Segment engagement profiles in 2021



Similarly to previous years, Happy Shoppers and Savvy Searchers were over-represented amongst engaged consumers, while Market Skeptics, Anxious Avoiders and Contented Conformers stand out amongst disengaged consumers.



Base: 2021: Total (4037), Engaged (2638) Disengaged (1399); Total 2020 (4608) ↑↓ indicate significant differences between 2020 and 2021; ▲ ▼ indicate significant differences engaged vs disengaged

## Low carbon technology adopters are among the most likely to have engaged in the energy market

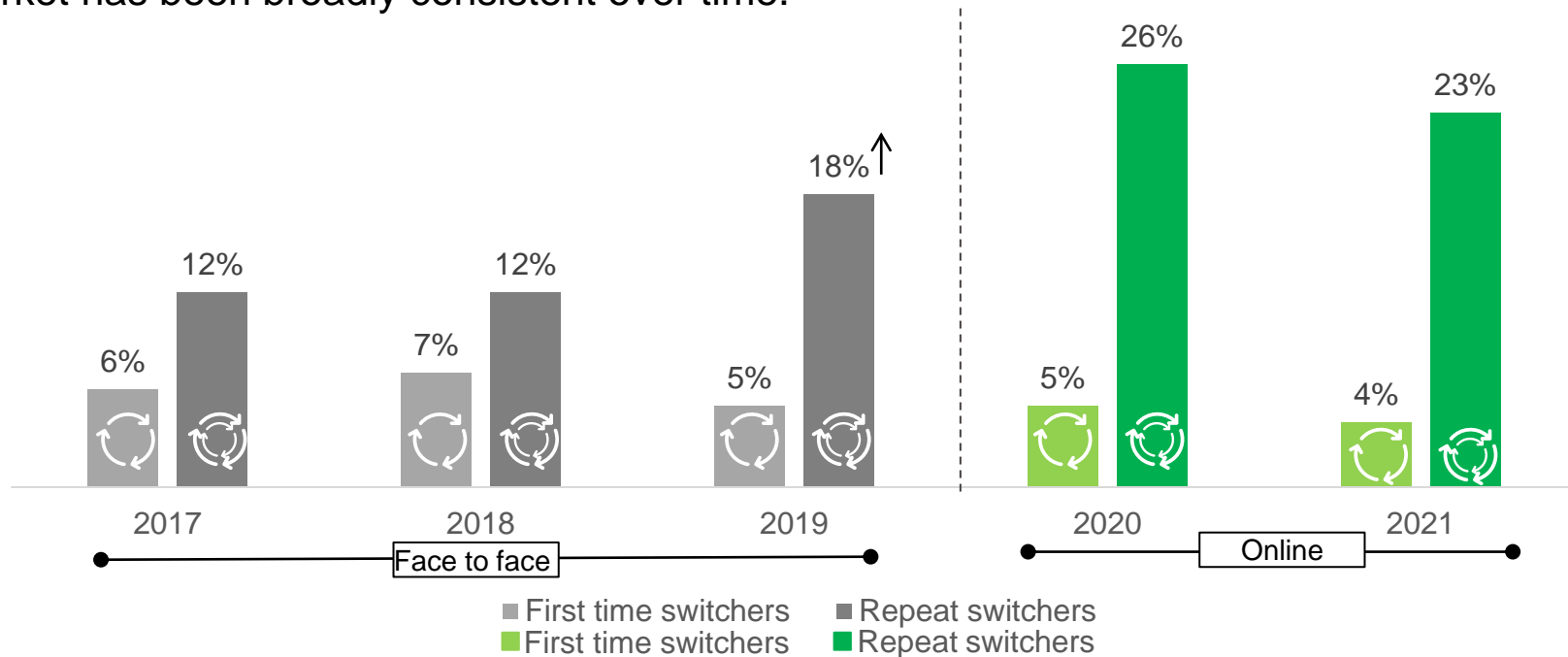


- These are people who have at least one of: a plug-in electric vehicle, solar panels, a heat pump or smart appliances/heating. Most (82%) have only **one low carbon technology** in their home, with **smart appliances/heating** (71%) and **solar panels** (26%) being the most common. They are also more likely to be an **EV owner** (9% vs 2% of total sample).
- Low carbon technology adopters tend to be **younger** (16-34 year olds: 24% vs 16% of total sample), **more affluent** (earning £16k+: 78% vs 67% of total sample) and to **have children** (32% vs 22% of total sample).
- They tend to be **more likely to be engaged with the energy market** (74% vs 63% among total sample), particularly as **switchers** (35% switched supplier P12M vs 27% among total sample).
- They are more likely to be **signed up to energy scanning** (23% vs 18% of total sample), and to have a **smart meter** (65% vs 50% among total sample).

# Who's engaging? Growth in repeat switching



The majority of consumers who switch supplier are repeat switchers rather than first time switchers, as in 2020. Entry of first-time switchers to the market has been broadly consistent over time.



Firsttime. Thinking about the last time you switched energy supplier, was that the first time you've ever done it, or have you switched energy supplier before in the past? Online: Base: Total 2021 (4037), Total 2020 (4608). Face to face: Base: Total 2019 (4001), Total 2018 (4064), Total 2017 (4001). ↑↓ indicate significant differences between waves. CAUTION: Online waves have not been significance tested against face-to-face waves due to change in survey mode in 2020.

The 2020 and 2021 figures are not directly comparable with previous years because the main survey method changed from face-to-face to an online survey. Consumers who answer online surveys tend to be more engaged with the market and inclined to switch energy deals. They also show greater confidence in their ability to select an energy deal. This is likely to explain a large part of the apparent increase in engagement between 2019 and 2020. Source: Ofgem/Ipsos Consumer Survey 2021

# Profiles and behaviours of first time and repeat switchers are very similar to previous years



## First time switchers

They tend to be **younger** (and profile is getting younger) and **parents**, with a slightly higher proportion of **renters**.

**Less engaged** in the energy market in general: despite switching they are still *slightly* less likely than repeat switchers to have compared energy deals (ever and in the P12M). They are also less likely to have previously switched tariff with their supplier.

They feel **less confident** engaging in the energy market (comparing and choosing), though no more likely to think that it was difficult to compare.

**Having received a bill or statement from their supplier** was a key motivation to switch for them. As with repeat switchers, PCWs were their most common switching method, though they were more likely than repeat switchers to have used an **auto-switching service** or taken advice from **friends and family**.

They are more engaged with **low carbon technologies** – they tend to be **EV owners** or have **heat pumps**. They are also more likely than repeat switchers to have a **smart meter**.



## Repeat switchers

The majority of repeat switchers are **aged 35 or older**, and **owner occupiers**.

They are **more experienced** in the energy market being more likely to compare deals and having also switched tariffs more than first time switchers.

They **less trusting** in energy companies and more likely to think about the **risks** associated with switching. While they are just as aware as first-time switchers of energy companies going out of business, this was less likely to affect their attitudes towards switching.

They are **more aware of different ways of engaging** (e.g. PCWs, scanning and auto switching services). **Price increase/end of tariff notices** were the key prompts to switching for them, with **PCWs** their main source of comparison and to switch.

Base: 2021 First time switchers (178), repeat switchers (1015)

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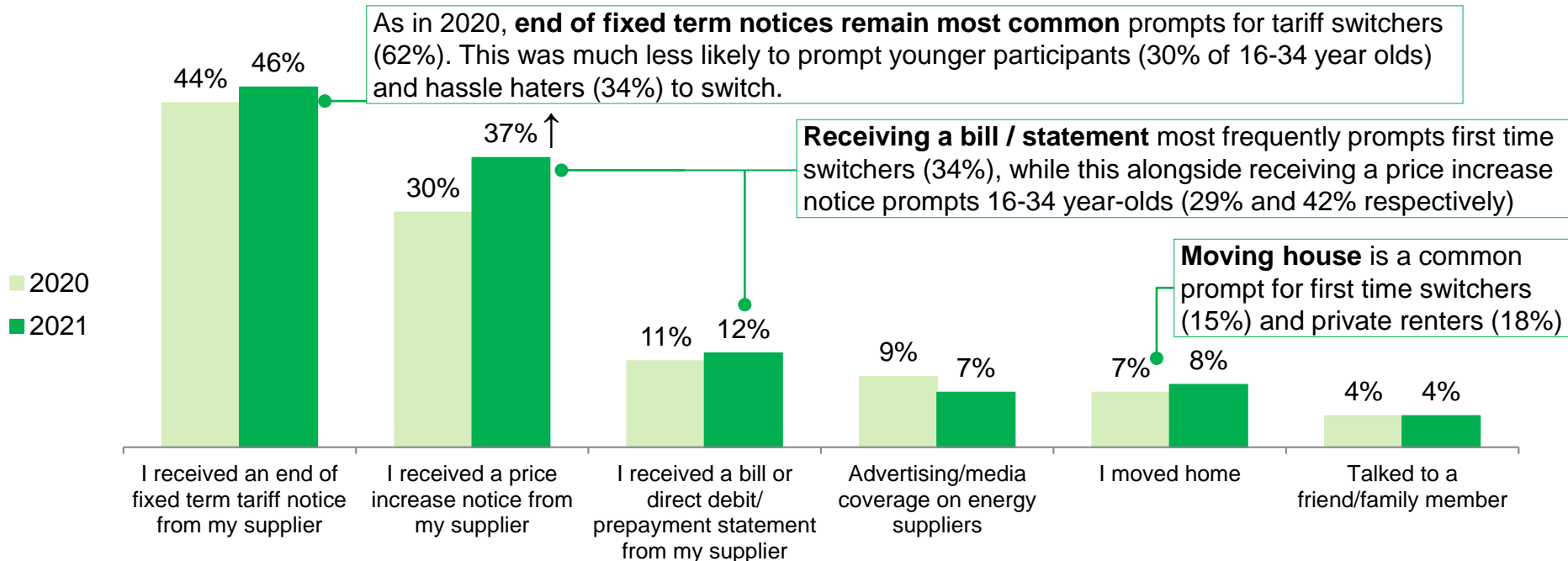
# Routes to engagement

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## What prompts engagement?

Supplier comms remain the key prompt to engagement. House moves remain a key prompt for first time switchers.



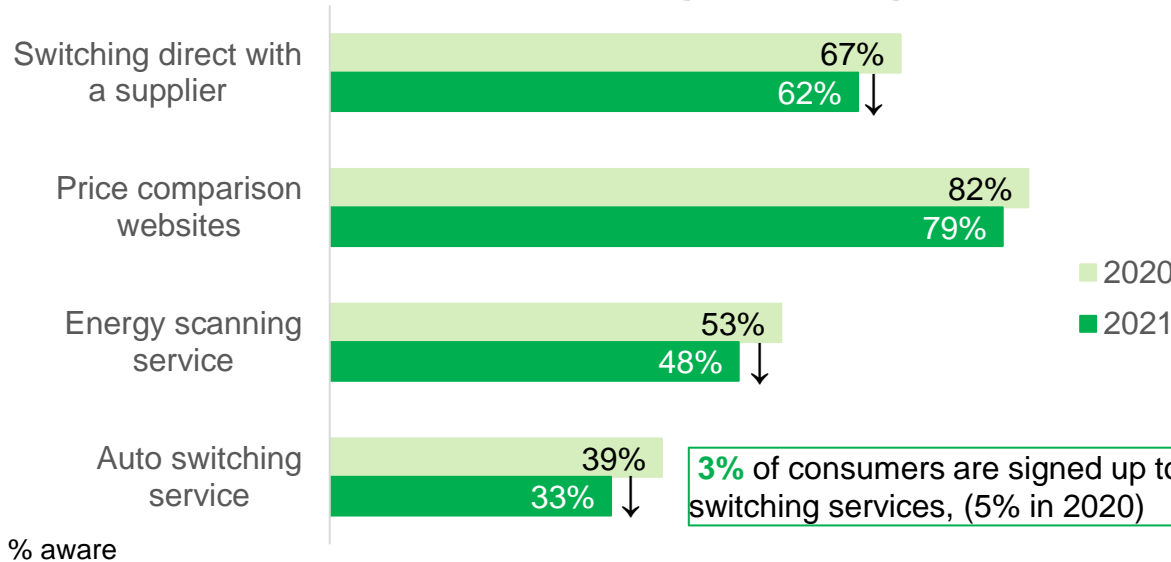
Q161. And thinking about the last time you switched supplier/switched tariff/compared energy deals what were the main reasons that caused you to do that? Base: Switched gas or electricity supplier or tariff, or compared suppliers in the past 12 months: 2021 (2638), 2020 (3080). ↑↓ indicates significant differences between 2020 and 2021.

# How do consumers engage?



Awareness of methods for comparing and switching was lower than in 2020 and reported sign up levels for auto switching services remain fairly low. Those who use energy scanning services also appear to be more engaged with low carbon technologies.

## Awareness of comparing/switching methods



**18%** of all consumers signed up to energy scanning services – this was 20% in 2020. Consumers were still more likely than total sample to be from **higher income** and **engaged** households. Notably they were also **more likely to have low carbon technologies**:

- Plug-in vehicle owners: 8% vs 4% total sample
- Low carbon technology owners: 31% vs 25% total sample

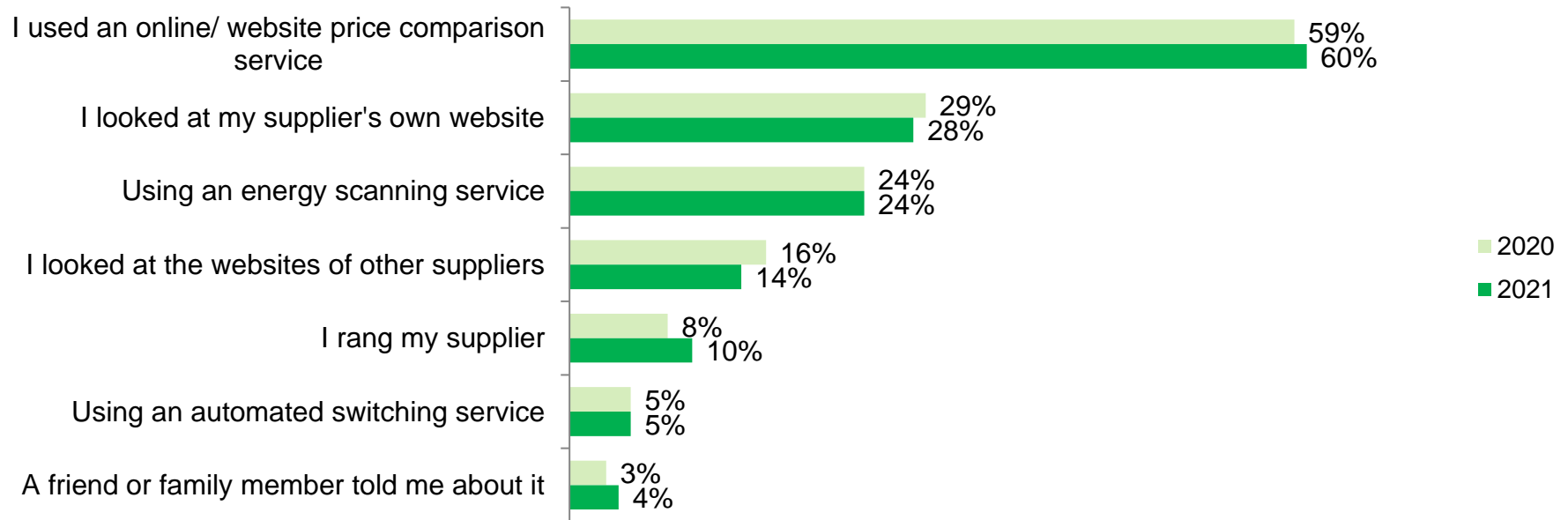
**3%** of consumers are signed up to auto switching services, (5% in 2020)

\*Low carbon technology' includes Plug-in EVs, Solar PV, smart appliances / heating controls, heat pump

METHODS. Which of these ways to compare energy deals and switch energy suppliers have you ever heard of? ; METHODS2 And which, if any of these has your household signed up to? Base: 2020: Total (4608). 2021: Total (4037); All aware of scanning or auto switching, 2021: (2357). ↑↓ indicates significant differences between 2020 and 2021

## What routes do people take to engage?

Online price comparison sites remain the main route used by those engaging in the energy market. There is little change on routes to engagement compared to 2020.



Q165. When you last you switched supplier/switched tariff/compared energy deals, how did you find out about the deals offered? Base: 2021 Engaged (2638); 2020 Engaged (3080)

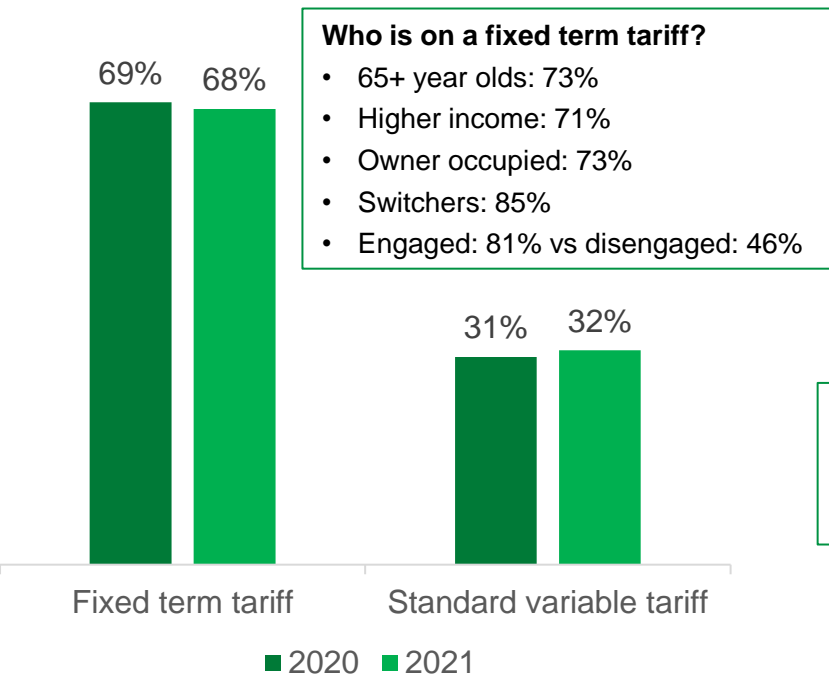
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What tariffs are consumers on?

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# What types of tariffs are consumers on?

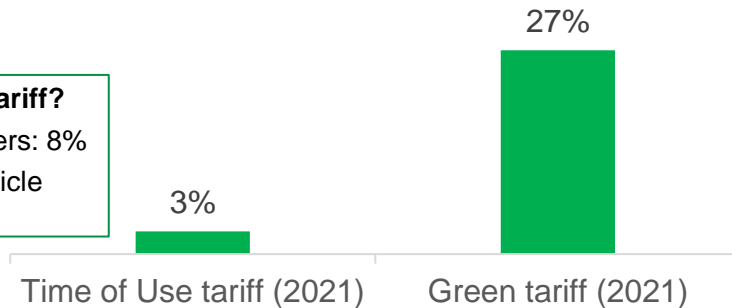
Nearly 7 in 10 are on fixed term tariffs, a similar number to 2020. Take up of Time of Use (TOU) tariffs is very low, while just over a quarter report being on a green tariff.



- Who is on a fixed term tariff?**
- 65+ year olds: 73%
  - Higher income: 71%
  - Owner occupied: 73%
  - Switchers: 85%
  - Engaged: 81% vs disengaged: 46%

- Who is on a green tariff?**
- 16-34 year olds (31%); Owner occupiers (30%); those living in modern (1990+) homes (31%), particularly flats (35%);
  - Those more engaged with energy generally: engaged consumers (34%); those on TOU tariffs (42%); those with smart meters (31%)
  - Those engaged in climate and low carbon technology\* users: those worried about climate change (30%); plug-in vehicle owners (58%); those with green technology (36%)

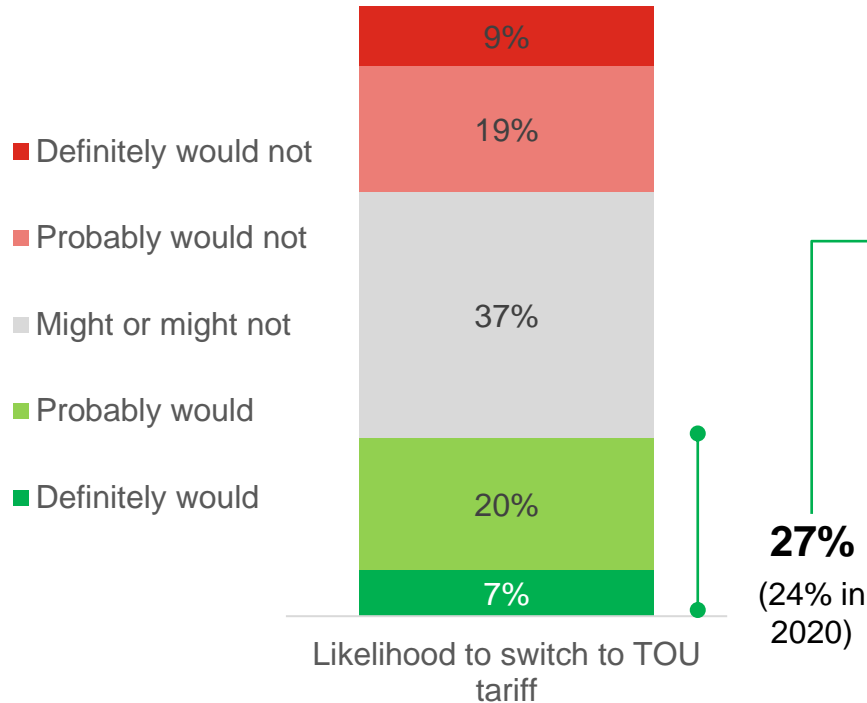
- Who is on a TOU tariff?**
- First time switchers: 8%
  - Fully electric vehicle owners: 16%



\*Low carbon technology includes Plug-in EVs, Solar PV, smart appliances / heating controls, heat pump

Q11: A fixed term tariff is a tariff that has a definite end date and you pay a set rate per unit of energy. Are you on a fixed term tariff? 2021: Total (4037); 2020: Total (4608). ↑↓ indicate significant differences between 2020 and 2021. **NB Some participants were confused as to whether their household was on a time of use tariff, so results should be treated as indicative.**

# A quarter of those not currently on a TOU tariff say they would switch to a TOU tariff – though most are ambivalent



Likelihood to switch to a TOU tariff if offered one is higher among:

- Households with children (32%)
- Those on a green tariff (30%) or likely to switch to one (39%)
- Those with smart meters (31%)
- Those with low carbon technologies (31%)

\*Low carbon technology' includes Plug-in EVs, Solar PV, smart appliances / heating controls, heat pump

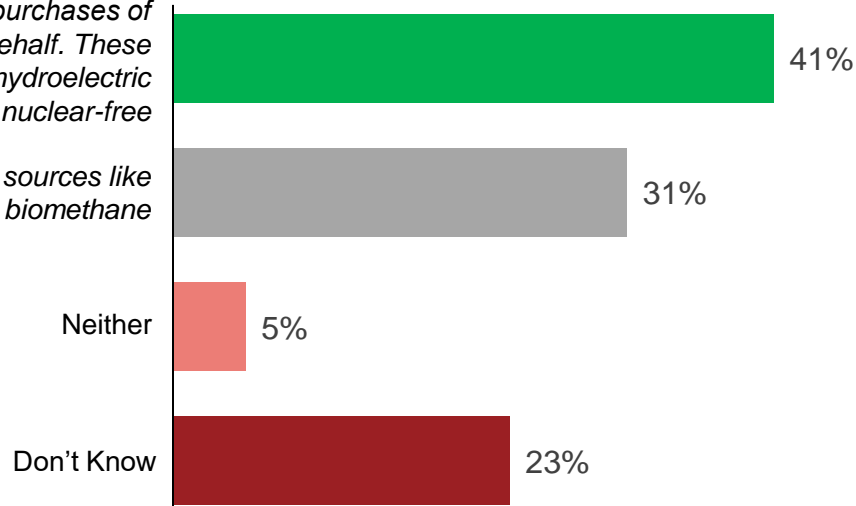
QPEAK4. And if a time of use tariff was available, how likely would your household be to switch to it? Base: 2020 Aware of peak and off-peak periods, not on a TOU tariff and not in the process of switching (3160); 2021 All who are not on a time of use tariff (2707). ↑↓ indicate significant change between waves

## Understanding of green tariffs

There is a high level of confusion and uncertainty about what a green tariff is, with a third assuming it means all their energy is from renewables, and a quarter unable to determine

*It means that some or all of the electricity I use is 'matched' by purchases of renewable energy that your energy supplier makes on your behalf. These could come from a variety of sources such as wind farms and hydroelectric power stations. Some green supply tariffs are also nuclear-free*

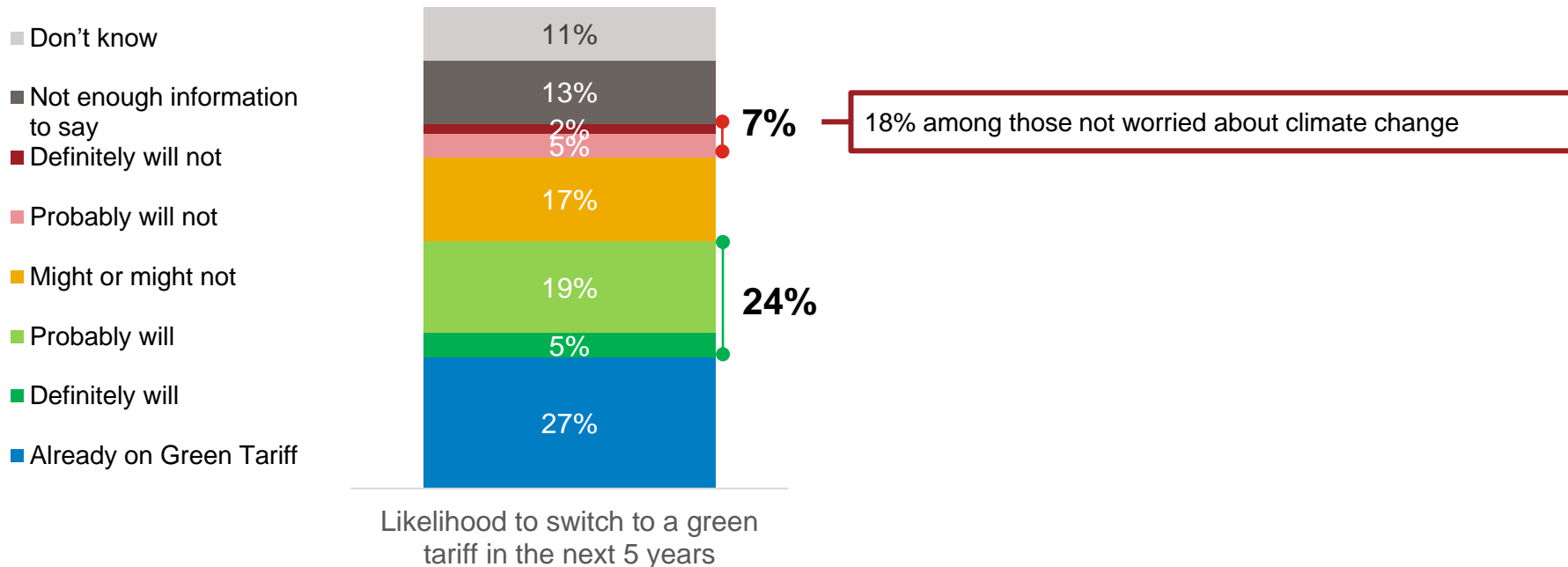
*It means that all the energy I use is generated from sources like wind, solar or hydro or biomethane*



# Likelihood of switching to green tariff



Half of consumers report that they are either on a green tariff currently, or say they are likely to switch to one in the next 5 years.



GREEN3: Thinking realistically, how likely is it that your household will switch to a 'green' tariff in the next 5 years? Base: Total 2021 (4037)



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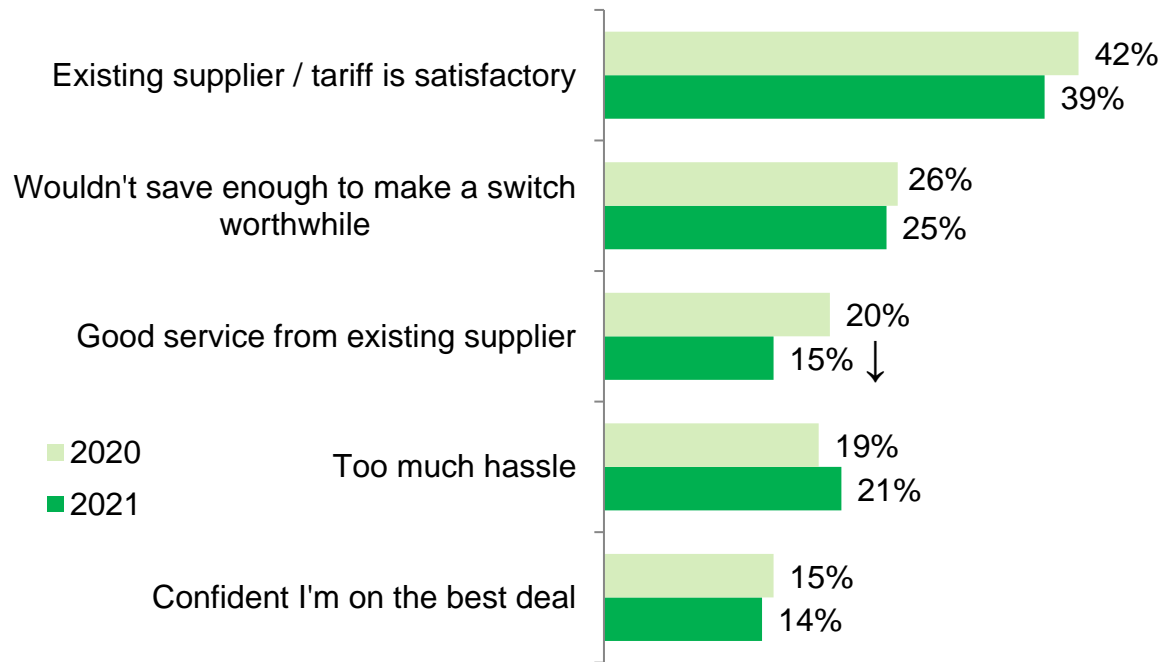
# Perceptions and barriers to engagement

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# Why don't customers engage?



Reasons for not engaging remain similar over time: satisfaction with existing supplier or tariff is reported as the most common reason.



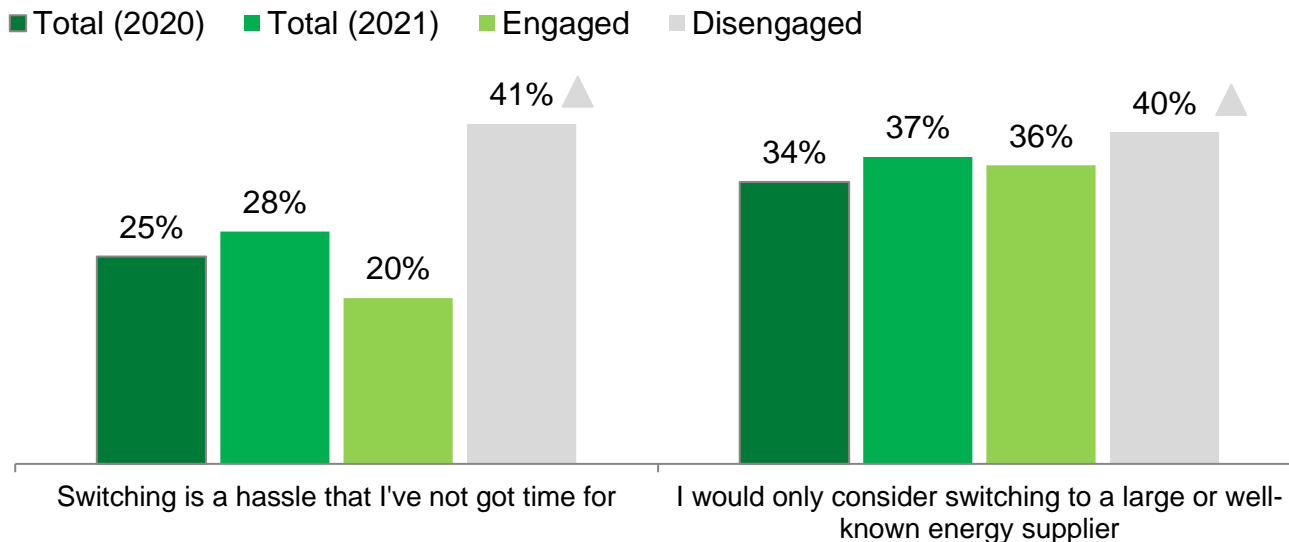
In 2021, fewer consumers who have not engaged in the past 12 months say this is because they receive good service from their existing supplier compared to 2020.

NotSh. Are there any particular reasons why you have not <shopped around to see if there are any better energy deals /switched tariff or switched supplier>? Base: Shopped around in energy market but not switched supplier or tariff in P12M, or not shopped around in energy market at all in P12M: 2021 (1870), 2020 (2040). ↑↓ indicates significant differences between 2020 and 2021 Risks.

# Belief that switching is a hassle or the desire to only switch to a larger supplier is consistent with 2020 levels



Disengaged consumers remain more likely to perceive switching as being a hassle and would only consider switching to a well-known or large supplier.



**Agreement that switching is a hassle is higher among:**

- 16-34 year olds: 44%
- Earning less than £16k: 32%
- Private renters: 33%
- Those with children in the household: 34%
- Those on standard variable tariffs: 38%
- First-time switchers: 41%
- In arrears: 45%

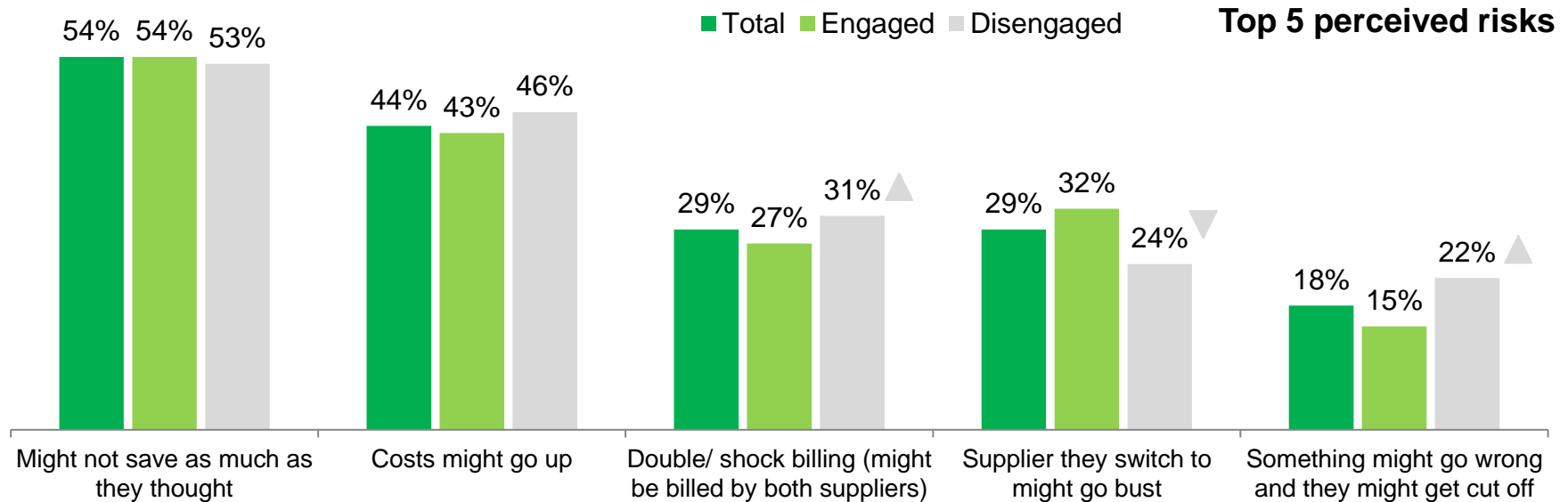
% agree

Q121. How much do you agree or disagree ...? Base: 2021: Total (4037). Engaged (2638), Disengaged (1399) 2020: Total (4608). ↑↓ indicate significant differences between 2020 and 2021; ▲▼ indicate significant differences engaged vs disengaged

# The top perceived risks of switching remain the same as in 2020



As in 2020, disengaged consumers were more concerned about double shock billing and being cut off, but less worried about their new supplier going bust.

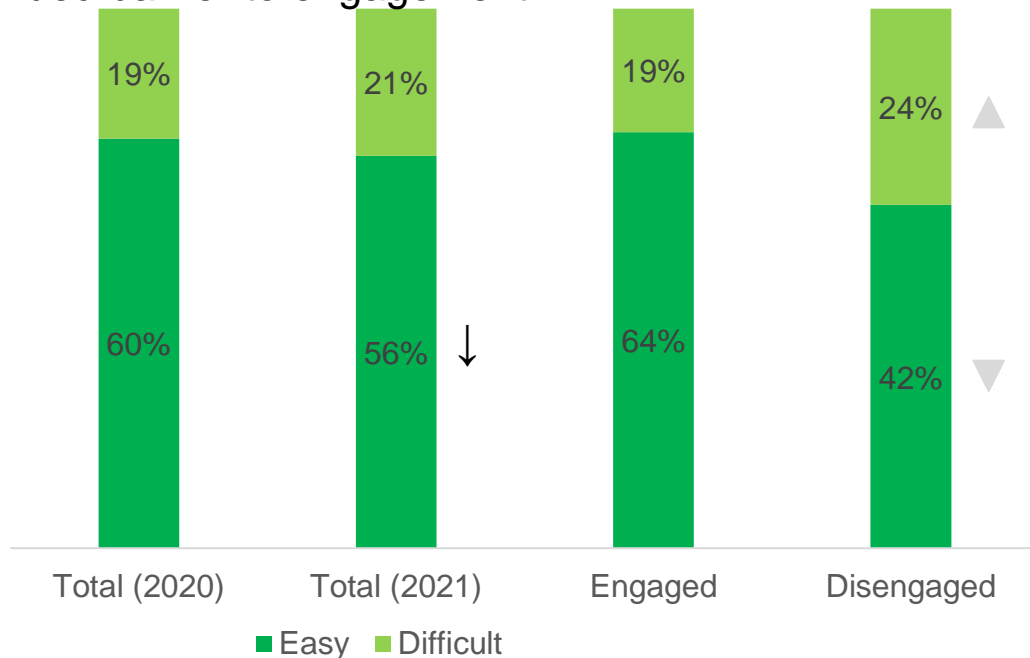


Risks. What, if anything, do you think might be the risks associated with switching energy suppliers? Base: 2021: Total (4037). Engaged (2638), Disengaged (1399) ▲ ▼ indicate significant differences engaged vs disengaged

## How easy do people believe it is to compare different tariffs?



Over half of consumers believe it is easy to compare different tariffs, down slightly on 2020. Higher perceived difficulty amongst disengaged consumers suggests this may be a continued barrier to engagement.



### Belief that comparing tariffs is easy is higher among:

- Green tariff users: 67%
- Switchers: 69%
- EV owners: 66%
- Those with any low carbon technologies: 61%

### Belief that comparing tariffs is not easy is higher among:

- In financial difficulty: 27%
- Contented conformers: 42%

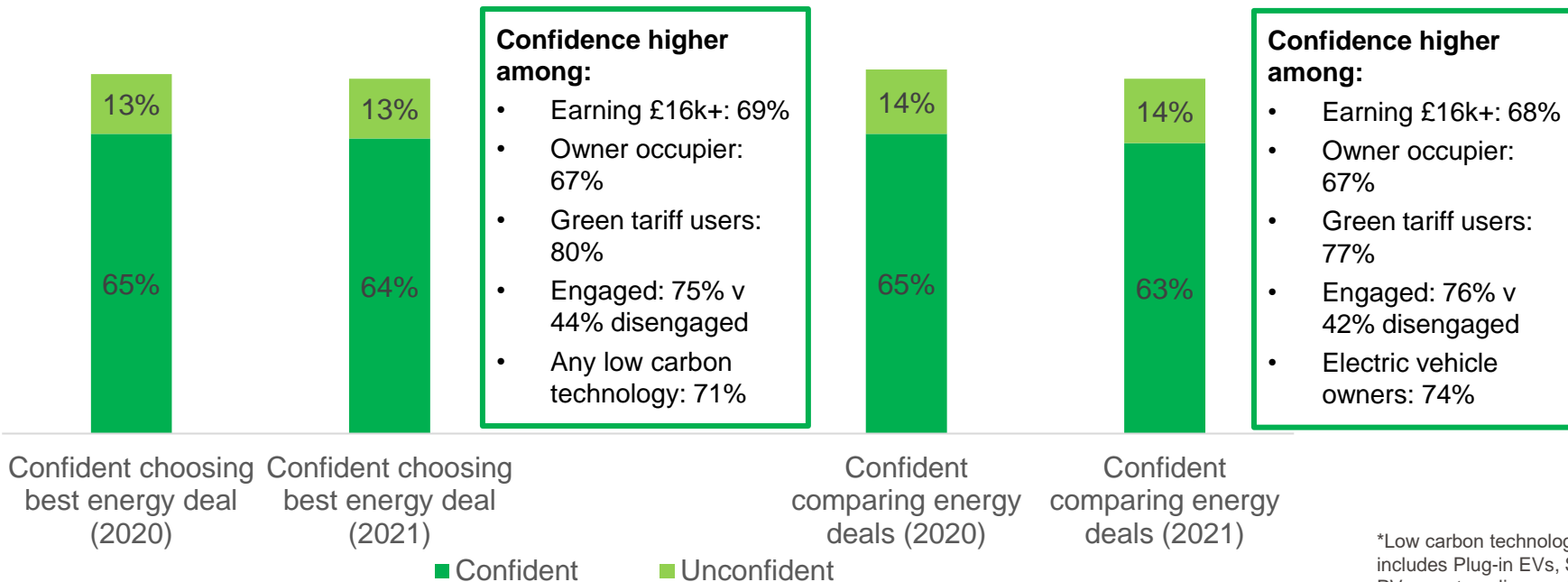
\*Low carbon technology' includes Plug-in EVs, Solar PV, smart appliances / heating controls, heat pump

Q145. How easy or difficult do you believe it is to compare different tariffs for electricity or gas? Base: 2021: Total (4037); engaged (2638); disengaged (1399). ↑↓ indicate significant differences between 2020 and 2021; ▲ ▼ indicate significant differences engaged vs disengaged

# How confident do people feel engaging with the energy market? **ofgem**



Two thirds of consumers feel confident comparing energy deals and choosing the best deal for them.



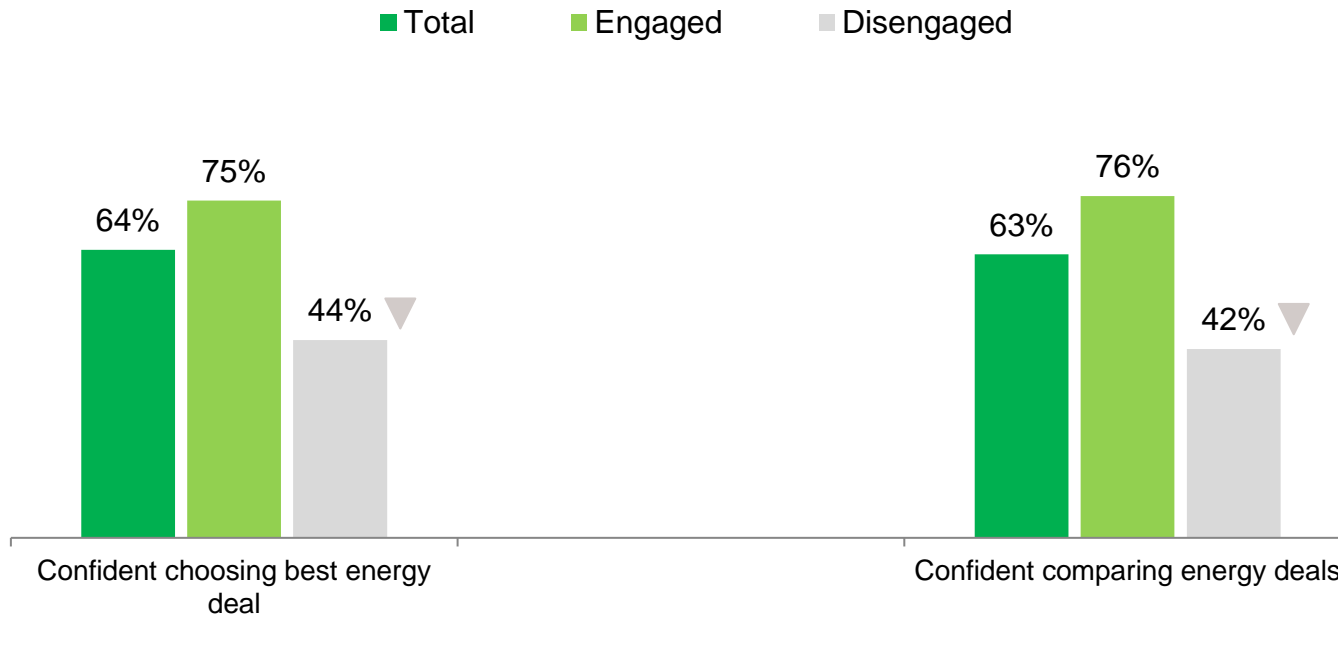
CONF2: How confident or unconfident do you feel about doing these things related to energy suppliers? Base: 2021: Total (4037); 2020: Total (4608)

\*Low carbon technology\* includes Plug-in EVs, Solar PV, smart appliances / heating controls, heat pump

# Disengaged consumers are consistently reporting lower levels of confidence engaging with the energy market



As in 2020, lower levels of confidence amongst disengaged consumers suggest lack of confidence may be a continued barrier to engagement.

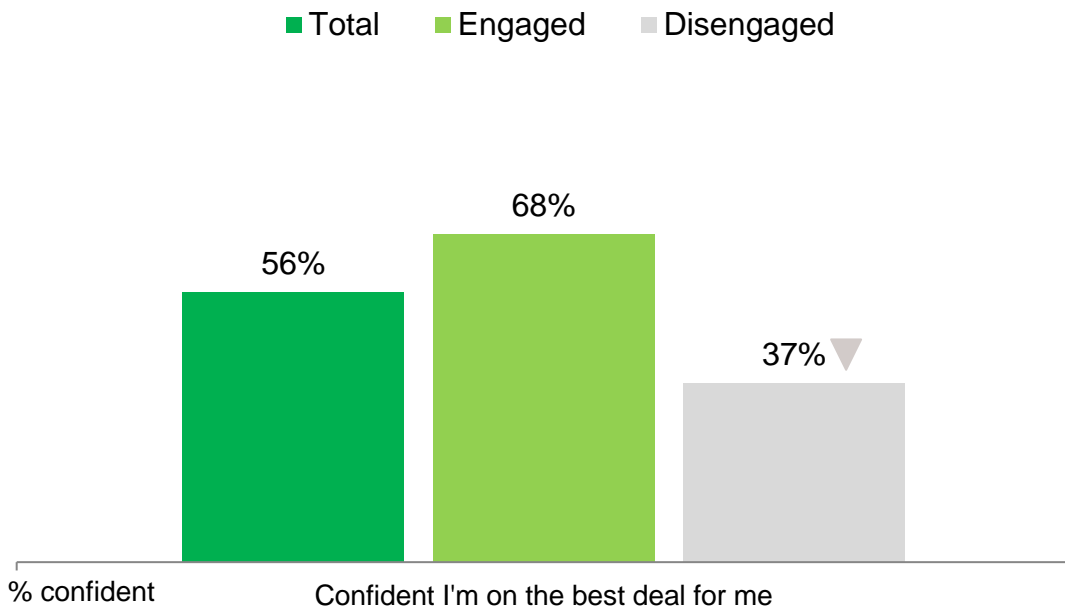


CONF2: How confident or unconfident do you feel about doing these things related to energy suppliers? Base: 2021: Total (4037), Engaged (2638), Disengaged (1399). ▲ ▼ indicate significant differences engaged vs disengaged

## How confident do people feel they are on the best deal?: engaged vs disengaged consumers



Unsurprisingly, engaged consumers are more likely to say they feel they are on the best deal for them, which is consistent with 2020 data.



### Confidence is higher among:

- 65+ year olds: 62%
- Those earning £16k+: 60%
- Owner occupiers: 60%
- Those on a fixed term (65%) or a green tariff (73%)
- P12M switchers: 74%
- Those signed up to energy scanning services: 75%
- EV owners: 75%
- Those with any low carbon technologies: 65%

\*Low carbon technology' includes Plug-in EVs, Solar PV, smart appliances / heating controls, heat pump

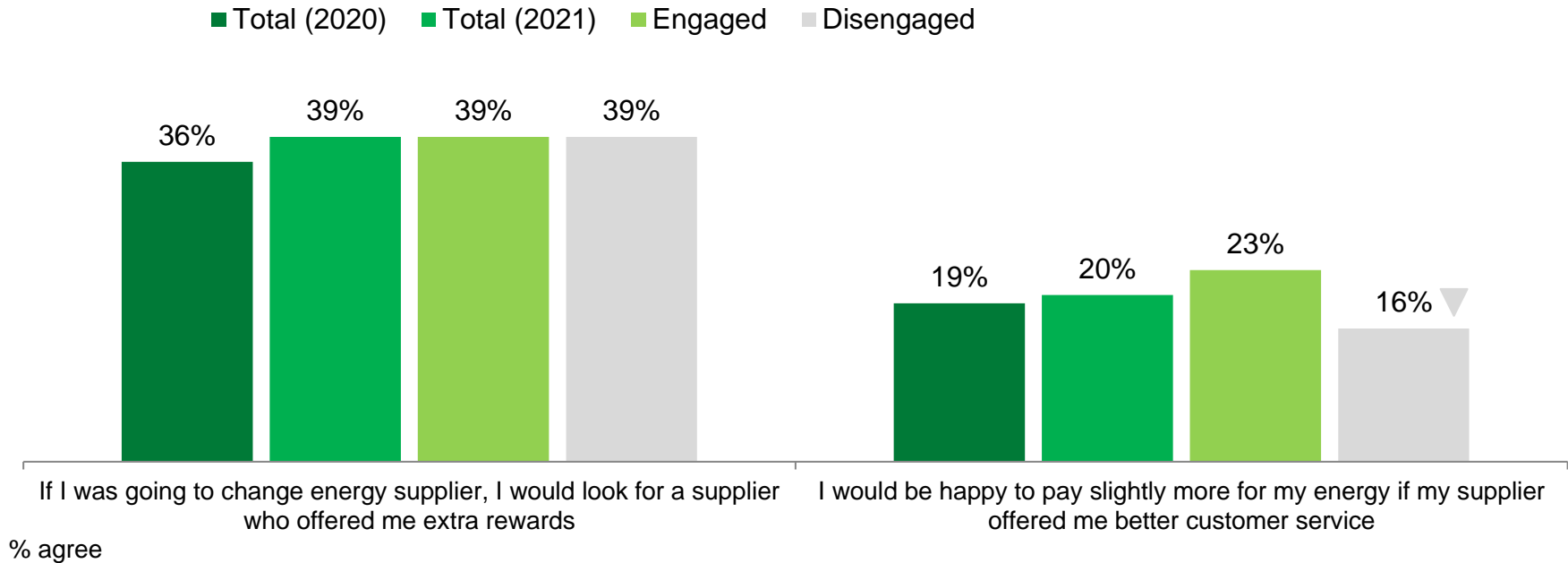
Q125. Thinking of the factors that matter most to you, how confident are you that you are currently on the best energy deal for you? Base: 2021: Total (4307) Engaged (2638), Disengaged (1399).



# Many engaged and disengaged consumers agreed they would look for extra rewards if changing energy supplier



Fewer disengaged consumers would be willing to spend more for customer service.



SPATT. To what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements about energy suppliers? Base: 2021: Total (4037), engaged (2638); disengaged (1399). 2020: Total (4609) ▲ ▼ indicate significant differences engaged vs disengaged

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# Experiences and outcomes

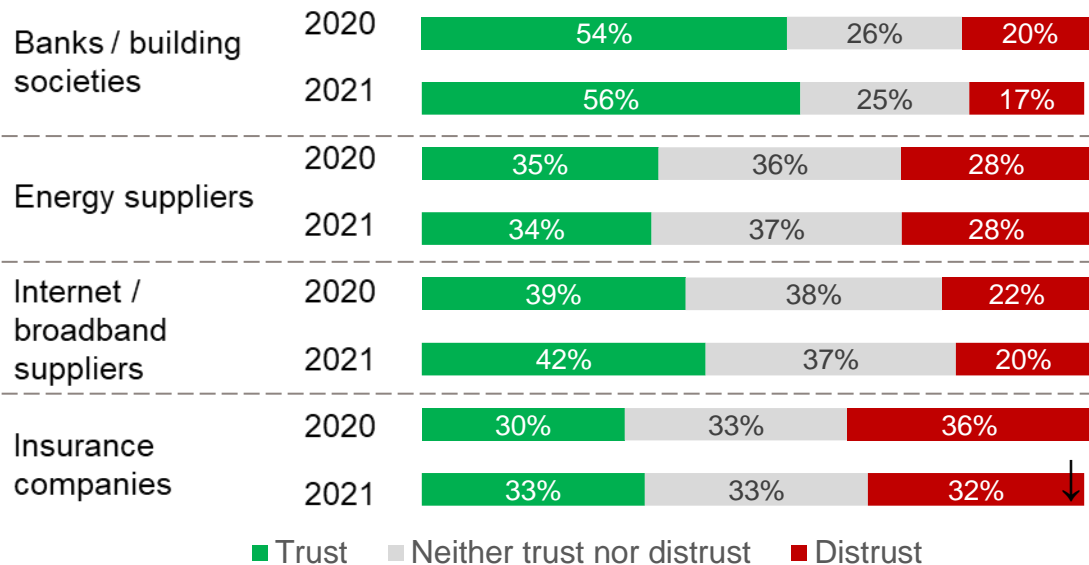
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## Do consumers trust energy suppliers generally?

ofgem



Trust in energy suppliers *in general* to be fair in dealing with customers is lower than for financial services companies and broadband suppliers. Trust and distrust has remained broadly the same between 2020 and 2021.



Trust was often highest in groups that tend to be engaged:

- 16-34s (38%) AND 65+ year olds (39%)
- Those with any children in the household (40%)
- First-time switchers (47%)
- Those with smart meters (38%)
- EV owners (55%)
- Those with low carbon technology (39%)

TRUST. To what extent do you trust or distrust each to be fair in the way they deal with customers and citizens? Base: Total 2020 (4608); Total 2021 (4037). ↑↓ indicate significant differences between 2020 and 2021.

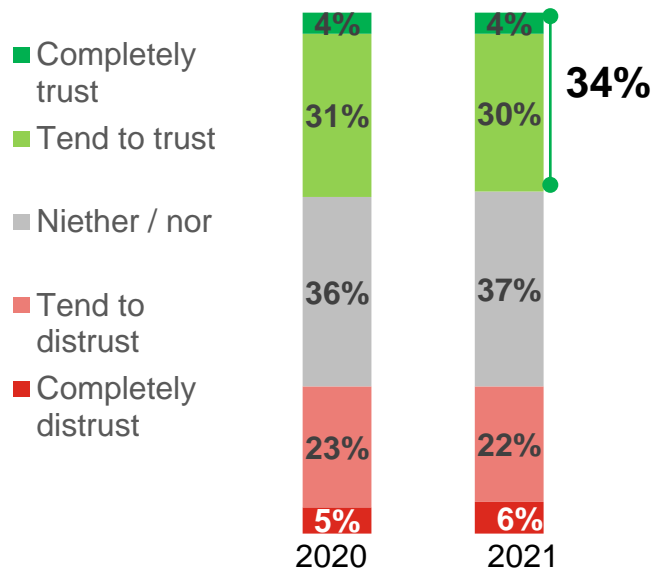
\*Low carbon technology' includes Plug-in EVs, Solar PV, smart appliances / heating controls, heat pump

# Consumer trust (1)



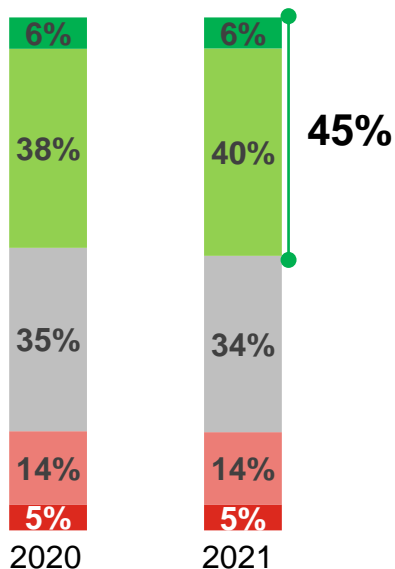
Just over a third of consumers say they trust the energy sector to treat customers fairly. As in previous years, customers are more likely to trust their supplier than the sector as a whole, though fewer trust their supplier to charge them a fair price.

Trust in the energy sector

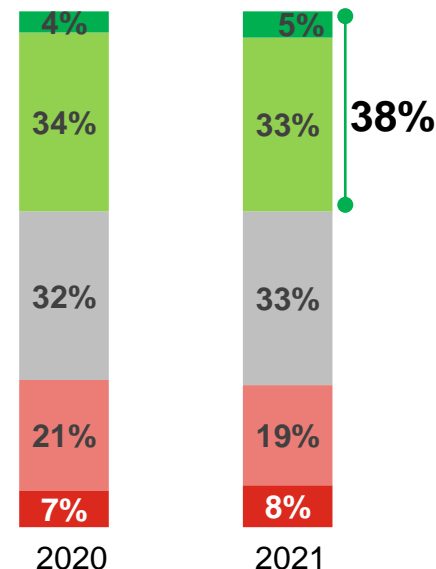


To what extent do you trust / distrust your energy supplier(s) to...

Treat you fairly



Charge a fair price

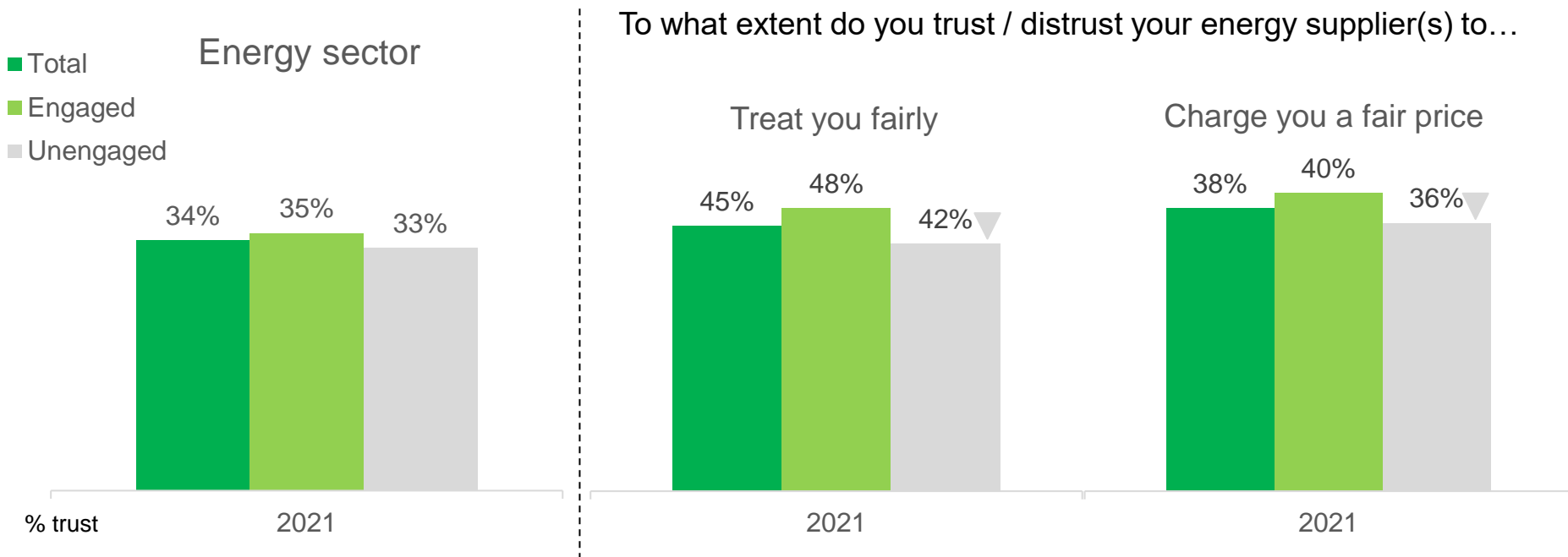


QTRUST: To what extent do you personally trust / distrust energy suppliers to be fair in the way they deal with customers and citizens? Q68: To what extent do you trust / distrust your energy suppliers to...? 2021: Total (4037); 2020: Total (4608).

## Consumer trust (2)



While engagement does not seem to be linked to trust in the energy sector, engaged consumers are more likely to trust their own energy supplier. This pattern is similar to 2020.



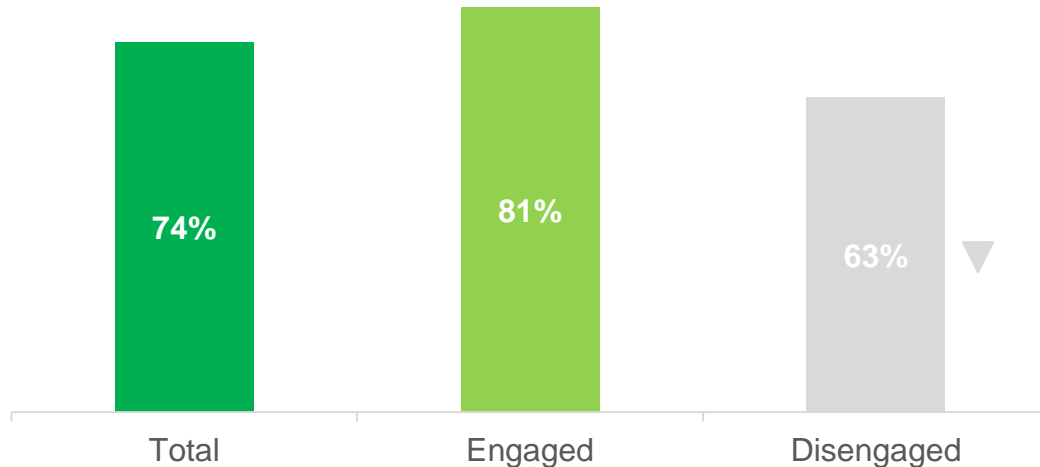
QTRUST: To what extent do you personally trust / distrust energy suppliers to be fair in the way they deal with customers and citizens? Q68: To what extent do you trust / distrust your energy suppliers to...? 2021: Total (4037); Engaged (2638) Disengaged (1399). ▲ ▼ indicate significant difference engaged vs disengaged

## Awareness of price cap



Three-quarters of consumers were aware of the energy price cap. Awareness amongst those who were engaged was significantly higher than among the disengaged.

Awareness of energy price cap



% aware

Despite their prices being protected by the energy price cap, **awareness** was significantly **lower** among those on **standard variable tariffs** (64%) compared to total sample (74%) and those who are on a fixed term tariff (79%).

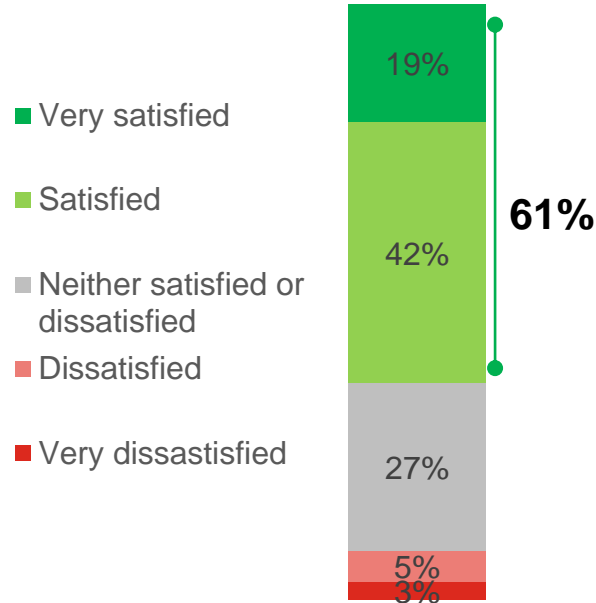
QCAP1: In the UK, there is an energy price cap which limits the amount an energy supplier can charge for a unit of energy. Before today, had you heard of this? 2021: Total (4037); engaged (2638); disengaged (1399). ▲ ▼ indicate significant difference engaged vs disengaged. NB: question asked for first time in 2021. **Fieldwork was completed before publicity about increases in price cap/energy crisis w/c 20<sup>th</sup> Sep.**

# Satisfaction with current supplier's customer service



3 in 5 were satisfied with the customer service from their current supplier

## Levels of satisfaction with current supplier's customer service



### Satisfaction was highest among:

- 65+ year olds: 69%
- Owner occupied: 63%
- Those on green tariffs: 71%
- First time switchers: 75%
- Engaged: 65% vs disengaged: 55%
- Signed up to auto-switching service: 70%

### And lowest among:

- 35-64 year olds: 58%
- Private renters: 57%
- Those in financial difficulty: 50%
- Those on standard variable tariffs: 53%

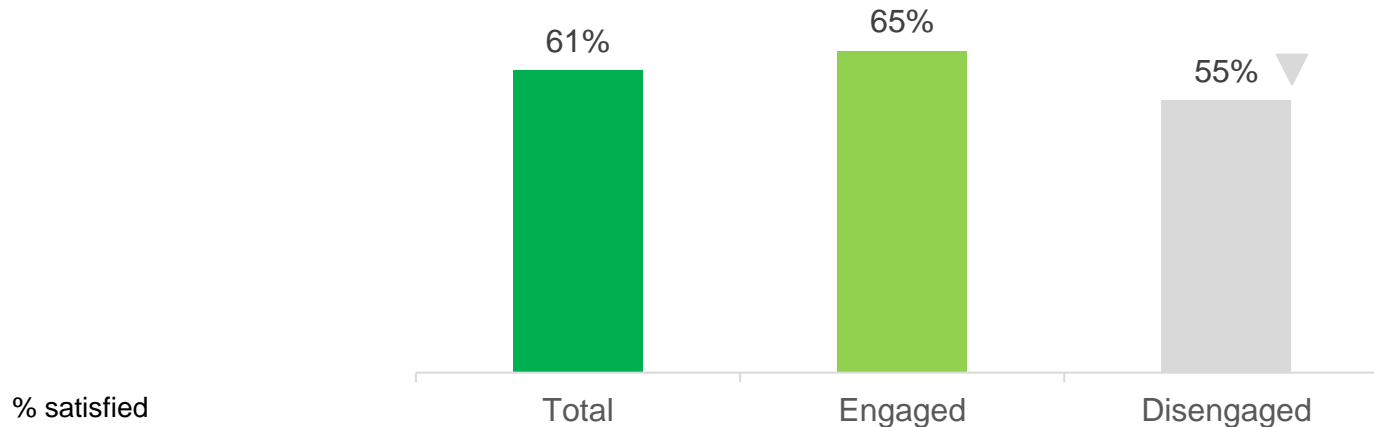
SATISFY. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the overall customer service you receive from your current supplier? 2021: Total (4037); engaged (2638); disengaged (1399). ▲ ▼ indicate significant difference engaged vs disengaged. NB: question asked for first time in 2021.

## Satisfaction with current suppliers' customer service



Engaged consumers were more likely to be satisfied with their current supplier's customer service.

Level of satisfaction with current supplier's customer service – total and engaged / disengaged

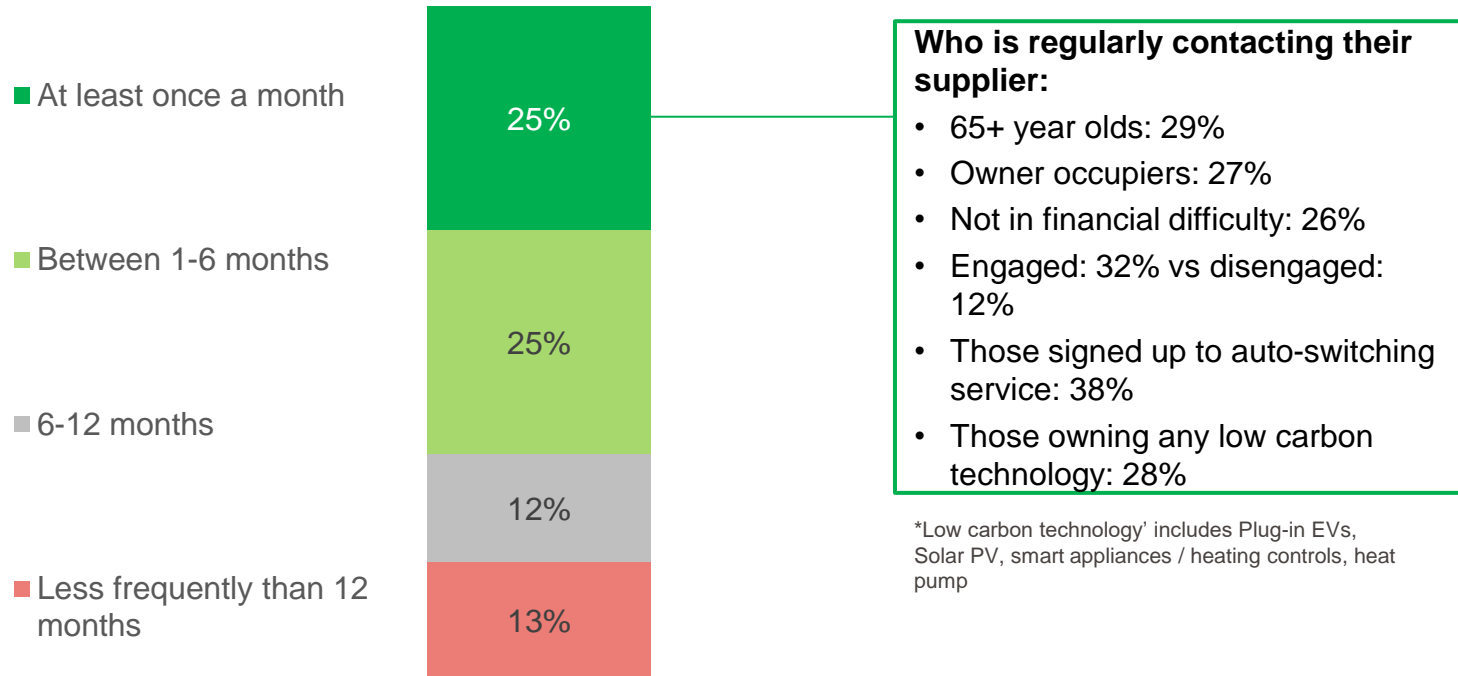


SATISFY. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the overall customer service you receive from your current supplier? 2021: Total (4037); engaged (2638); disengaged (1399). ▲ ▼ indicate significant difference engaged vs disengaged. NB: question asked for first time in 2021.



## Contacting energy suppliers

A quarter of people said they contact their energy supplier at least once a month, and a half at least every six months. Engaged groups tended to contact their supplier more frequently.

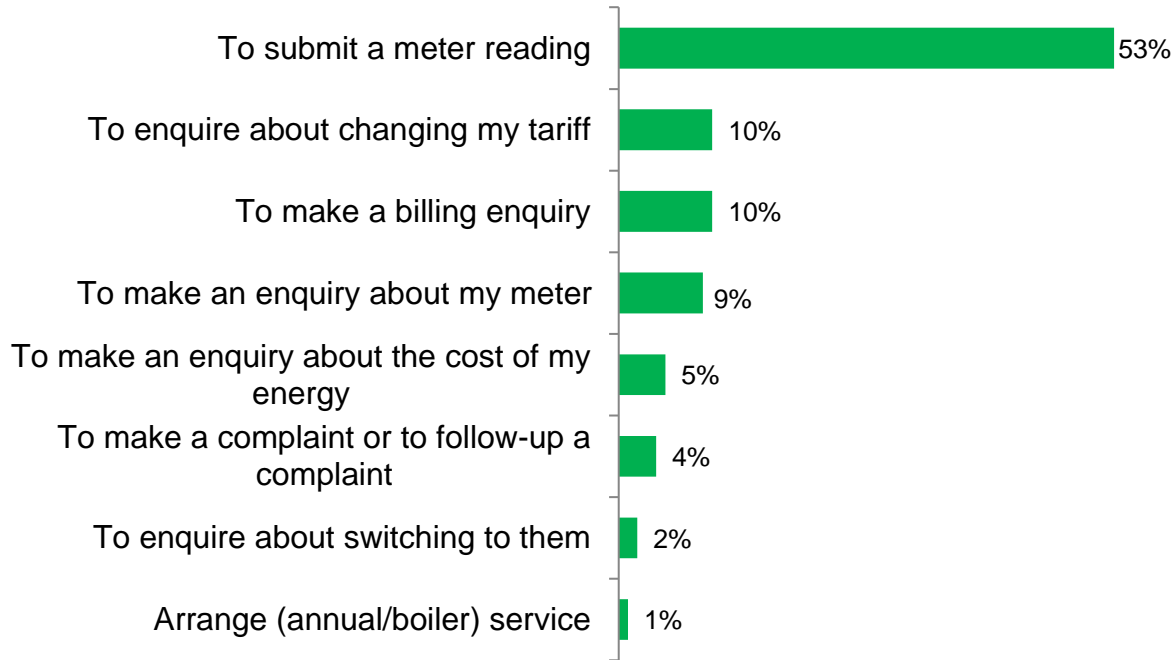


CONTACT1: Roughly, how often would you say you contact your energy supplier(s), for example to submit a meter reading, to make an enquiry or submit a complaint? 2021: Total (4037). NB: question asked for first time in 2021.

# Why do consumers contact energy suppliers?



Over half of those who had contacted their energy supplier had done so about submitting a meter reading.



Those with a smart meter were significantly less likely to have contacted to submit a meter reading (32% v 71% without a smart meter)

CONTACT 2. And thinking about the last time you contacted your supplier, what was it about? Base: 2021, all who have contacted their supplier (3399). NB: question asked for first time in 2021.

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# Vulnerable Consumers

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## Who is more likely to be a vulnerable consumer?

- Vulnerable consumers are often **vulnerable in several ways** – for example, those on a prepayment meter are more likely to be in financial difficulty, on means tested benefits, in arrears on energy bills, in receipt of Warm Homes Discount or have a disability or illness.
- They tend to be **younger or middle aged**; in the **DE** social grade; earning **less than £16k** a year; **renters**; or **have children** (particularly school-age children (5-15 years old)).
- Vulnerable consumers tend to be **less likely to be engaged**, particularly when it comes to switching. Consumers who have been **financially impacted by COVID-19** are the **exception** to the rule – they tend to be more engaged particularly through comparing energy deals or switching supplier, and are more likely to be signed up to energy scanning or auto switching services.
- However, there are some **promising leads for boosting engagement** among vulnerable consumers, as they are more likely to **have a smart meter**.

## Only a minority of PPM consumers report self-disconnecting, similar to 2020

PPM consumers are also more likely to be in financial difficulty: **37%** vs 16% of total sample

**11%** of consumers answering the survey said they used a prepayment meter

**25%** of PPM consumers said they have been temporarily disconnected from their energy supply

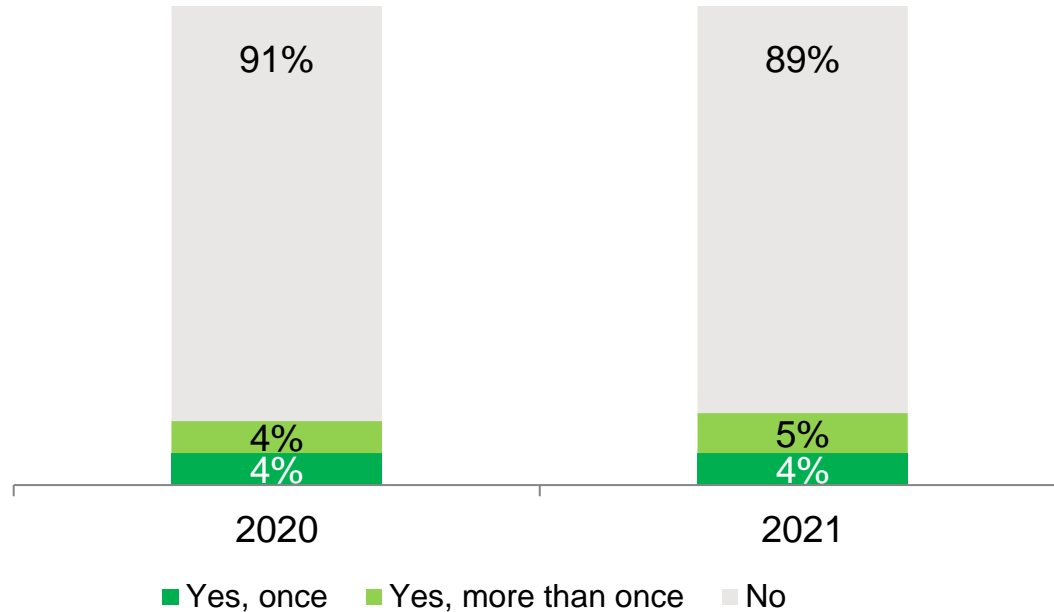
**41%** say this was for more than 3 hours

**22%** say this was for 1-3 hours

**35%** say this was for up to 1 hour

PPM1. How often, over the last year, would you say that you have been temporarily disconnected from your gas/electricity/gas or electricity supply because the meter ran out of credit before you topped it up? Base: 2021 Has prepayment meter (334); PPM2. And which is the longest period of time you have been disconnected from your gas/electricity/gas or electricity supply in the last year? Base: 2021 Has been disconnected from any fuel type on PPM in the past 12 months (91) \* CAUTION LOW BASE

# The proportion saying they have fallen behind on energy bills remains very low (9%)



QARREA. In the last twelve months, has the household been in arrears on your gas or electricity bills? Base: Total 2021 (4037); 2020: Total (4608). ↑↓ indicate significant differences between 2020 and 2021

# Financially constrained households

ofgem

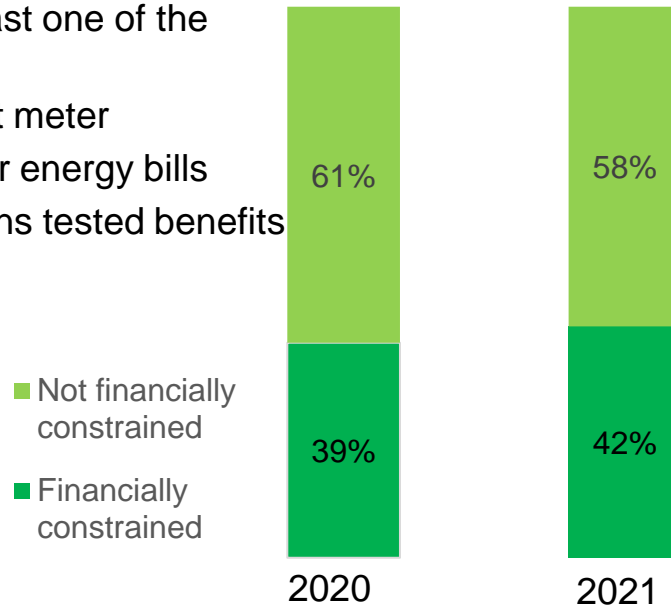


Two fifths of households are classified as financially constrained, similar to 2020.

## Definition of **financially constrained**:

Those who are at least one of the following:

- On a prepayment meter
- In arrears on their energy bills
- In receipt of means tested benefits



**24%** of financially constrained consumers switched supplier in the P12M, and they remain less likely to do so than non-financially constrained consumers. Barriers to switching were similar to non-constrained households:

- Satisfaction with existing supplier/ tariff (36%)
- Not saving enough to make it worthwhile (26%)
- Too much hassle/effort (20%)

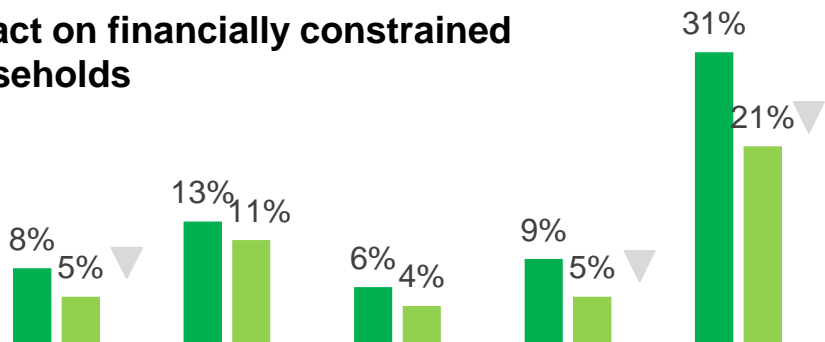
QENGAGE2: And which, if any, of these have you or your household done in the past 12 months? Base: Total 2021 (4037) Total 2020 (4608); NOTSH: Are there any particular reasons why you have not <shopped around to see if there are any better energy deals /switched tariff or switched supplier>? Base: 2020: Shopped around in energy market but not switched supplier or tariff in P12M, or not shopped around in energy market at all in P12M: Total (2040) Total 2021 (1870). 2021 Financially constrained: (761)

# Impact of COVID

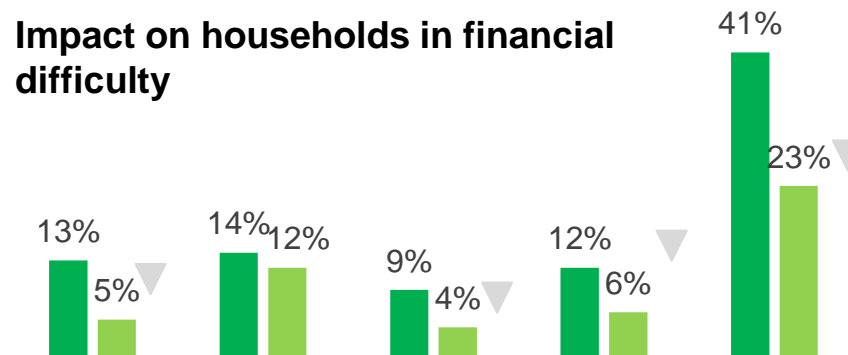


Households that are financially constrained or in financial difficulty are significantly more likely to report that COVID had a negative impact on their finances.

## Impact on financially constrained households



## Impact on households in financial difficulty



■ Financially constrained ■ Not financially constrained

■ In financial difficulty ■ Not in financial difficulty

COVID1. As a result of the COVID pandemic, have any of these happened to you or your household? Base: 2021 Financially constrained (1497); Not financially constrained (2540); In financial difficulty (573); Not in financial difficulty (3318) ▲ ▼ indicate significant difference financially constrained vs not financially constrained / in financial difficulty vs not in financial difficulty.



## Households in financial difficulty

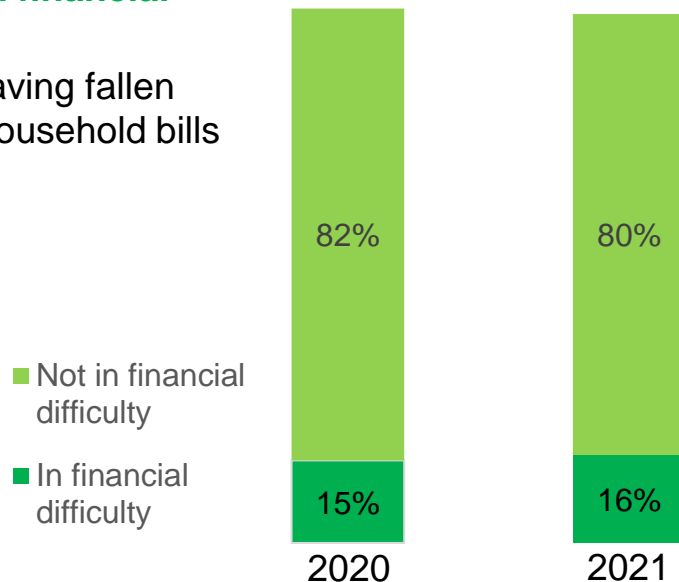
ofgem



16% of households are classified as in financial difficulty, which remains stable compared to 2020.

### Definition of being **in financial difficulty**:

Those who report having fallen behind on general household bills



**23%** of consumers in financial difficulty switched supplier in the P12M. They are still less likely to do so than consumers who are not in financial difficulty. Barriers to switching were similar to non-constrained households:

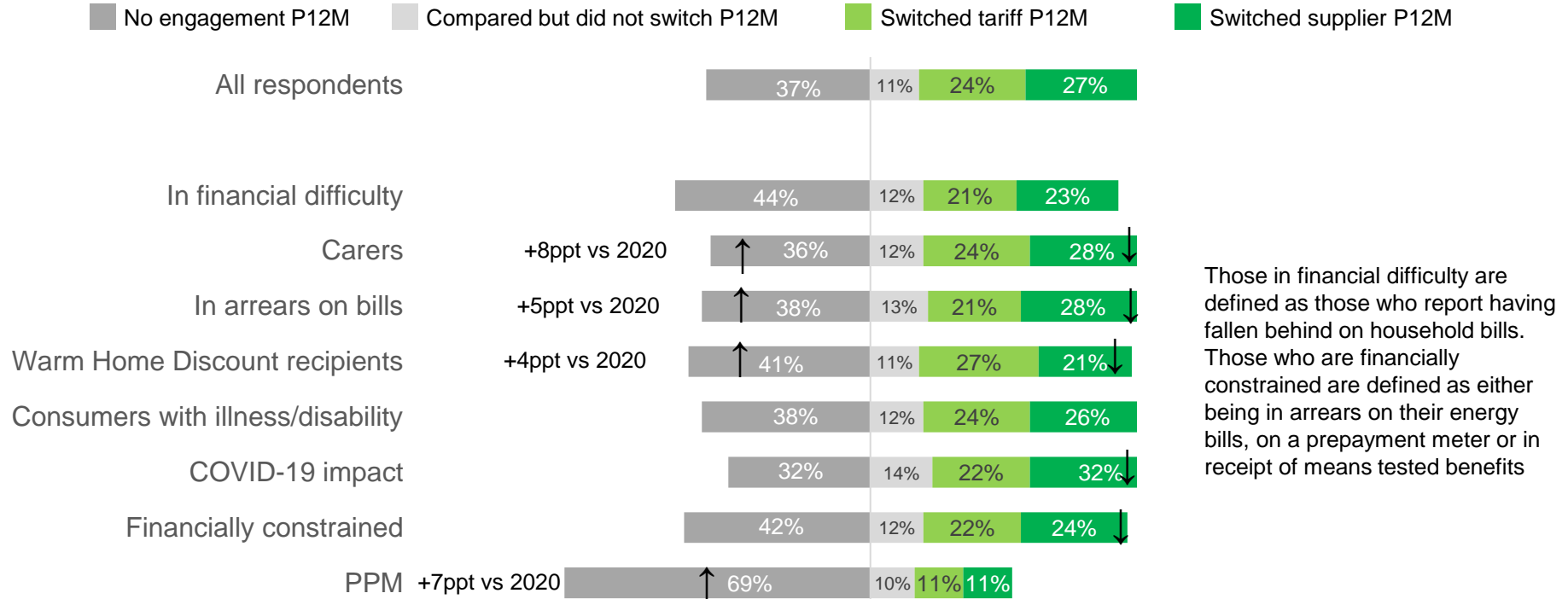
- Not saving enough to make it worthwhile (30%)
- Satisfaction with existing supplier/ tariff (29%)
- Too much hassle/effort (21%)

QENGAGE2: And which, if any, of these have you or your household done in the past 12 months? Base: Total 2021 (4037) Total 2020 (4608); NOTSH: Are there any particular reasons why you have not <shopped around to see if there are any better energy deals /switched tariff or switched supplier>? Base: 2020: Shopped around in energy market but not switched supplier or tariff in P12M, or not shopped around in energy market at all in P12M: Total (2040) Total 2021 (1870). QWELBI: Which one of the following statements best describes how well you are keeping up with all of your bills and credit commitments at the moment? Base: 2021 In financial difficulty: (316) 2020 In financial difficulty: (658)

# Which vulnerable consumers are engaging?



Across most groups, lack of engagement has risen significantly since 2020. Those on PPMs, in financial difficulty and who are financially constrained are the least engaged groups.



Those in financial difficulty are defined as those who report having fallen behind on household bills. Those who are financially constrained are defined as either being in arrears on their energy bills, on a prepayment meter or in receipt of means tested benefits

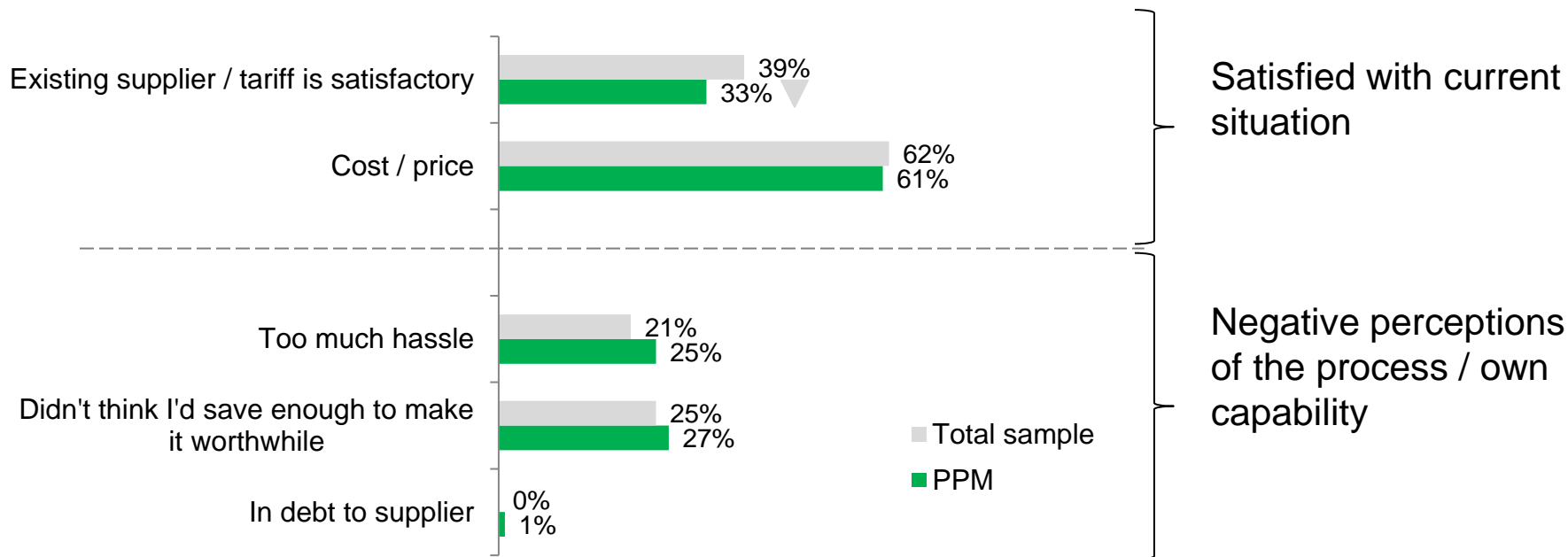
2021: ENGAGE2: And which, if any, of these have you or your household done in the past 12 months? Base: 2021: Total (4037) In financial difficulty (573), Carers (585), In arrears on bills (328), Warm Home Discount recipients (313), Consumers with disability/illness (1118), COVID-19 impact (1003), Financially constrained (1497), PPM (339). ↑↓ indicate significant differences between 2020 and 2021 on supplier switching and lack of engagement. Source: Ofgem/Ipsos Consumer Survey 2021.

## Households with prepayment meters – barriers to engaging

ofgem



Households paying for energy via PPM are significantly less likely to say they aren't engaging because they are satisfied with their current supplier/tariff, as in 2020. Their negative perceptions of the process and their capability suggests disengagement is instead likely driven by inertia / other priorities on their time.



NotSh. Are there any particular reasons why you have not <shopped around to see if there are any better energy deals /switched tariff or switched supplier-> Base: 2021: Shopped around in energy market but not switched supplier or tariff in P12M, or not shopped around in energy market at all in P12M: Total (1870) on PPM (263) ▲ ▼ indicate significant difference total vs on PPM

# Households with PPM: confidence and perceptions



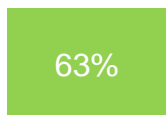
Those with PPMs were also less likely to feel confident engaging in the energy market and be put off switching because they think it will be a hassle. Increasing this confidence may help to encourage future engagement.

“Switching is a hassle  
I haven’t got time for”

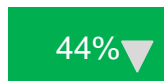


41% of PPM consumers agreed; ▲  
compared to 28% amongst total sample

Confident comparing the different energy deals available

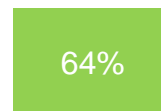


Total sample

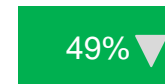


PPM

Confident choosing the best energy deal



Total sample



PPM

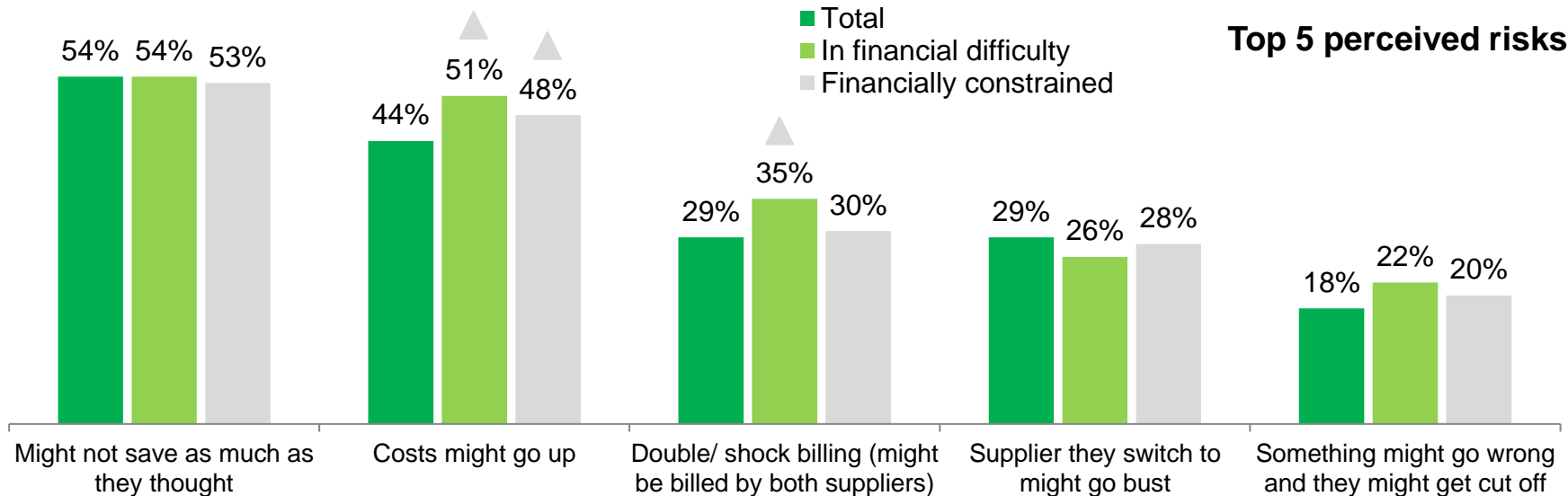
% confident

Conf2. How confident or unconfident do you feel about doing these things related to energy suppliers?.; Q121. How much do you agree or disagree...? Base: Total 2021 (4037); With PPM (339) ▲ ▼ indicate significant difference total vs PPM

# Those who are in financial difficulty or financially constrained see more risks to switching



They are more likely to perceive cost risks to switching, perhaps leading them to become disengaged.



Risks. What, if anything, do you think might be the risks associated with switching energy suppliers? Base: 2021: Total (4037). In financial difficulty (573). Financially constrained (1497) ▲ ▼ indicate significant differences vs total sample.

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## ISO 20252:2012

The international market research specific standard that supersedes BS 7911 / MRQSA & incorporates IQCS (Interviewer Quality Control Scheme); it covers the 5 stages of a Market Research project. Ipsos MORI was the first company in the world to gain this accreditation.



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