Energy costs
Survey report

Bastion
June 2026

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MILLS
RESEARCH

Key findings

- This nationally representative survey of 1,017 Kiwis (aged 18+) in June 2026 explored how people were feeling the pressure of rising energy and fuel costs.
- Rising fuel costs had reached most households, with around three quarters reporting a major or moderate impact, and most New Zealanders were actively looking for ways to cut back. Few expected relief, as most thought prices would climb further before they improved.
- Petrol prices were already reshaping how people travelled. Half had cancelled or scaled back holiday plans, and most were walking, cycling, or taking public transport more often, but the upfront cost remained the main barrier to switching to electric transport.
- Most felt they understood their energy costs and knew where to start saving, and awareness of specific options such as free power hours was high. Yet few had used online tools to work out what they could actually save.
- Most felt able to make changes to reduce their household energy costs themselves.
- Smarter energy plans and solar held the widest appeal, but intentions for the year ahead centred on small everyday changes rather than larger investments.
- A clear generational pattern ran through the survey. Younger New Zealanders were the most affected by costs and the most willing to change their behaviour, while older New Zealanders felt more confident they understood their costs and knew what to do.

Methodology

Nationwide survey

Results in this report are based upon questions asked in a Talbot Mills Research nationwide online survey. The basis of the sample is n=1,017 nationally representative respondents in New Zealand 18 years of age and over.

Representative sample

Interlocked age, gender and regional quotas were used during sampling. Weighting was further used to enhance how closely the results represent the adult population of New Zealand.

The maximum sampling error for a sample size of 1,017 at the 95% confidence level is ± 3.1%.

Fieldwork dates

Fieldwork for the questions in this report was conducted between the 8th and the 11th June 2026.

Reporting

All numbers are shown rounded to zero decimal places. Hence specified totals are not always exactly equal to the sum of the specified sub-totals. The differences are seldom more than 1%. (For example: 2.7 + 3.5 = 6.2 would appear: 3 + 4 = 6).

Feeling the squeeze

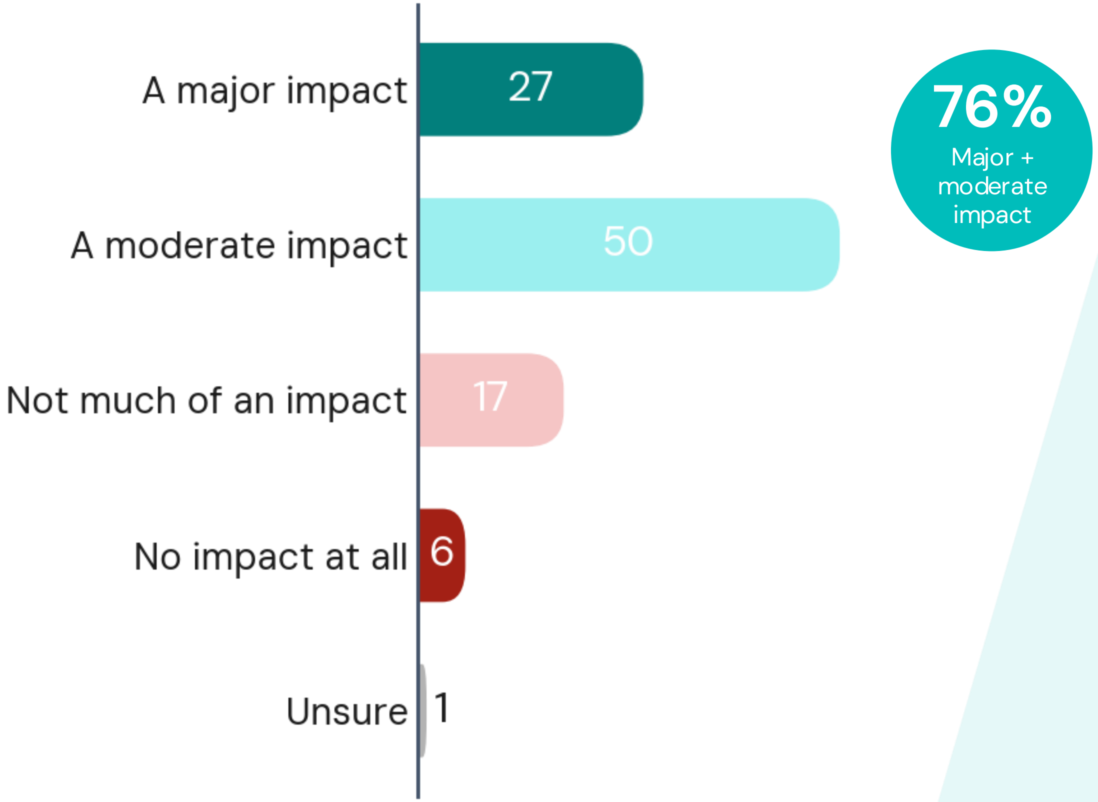
Commentary

Rising fuel costs reached most households, and New Zealanders were actively looking for ways to cut back. Few expected relief any time soon.

- Around three quarters of New Zealanders said rising fuel costs had affected their household budget over the past six months, with 76% reporting a major or moderate impact (27% major, 50% moderate). Just 6% said there had been no impact at all. Households with children reported the heaviest impact.
- Asked what single change they could make to reduce their energy spend, the most common answers were driving less or combining trips (25%), reducing general energy use (18%), and using public transport or active travel (18%). Reducing heating or hot water use followed at 13%, and 8% were unsure.
- Most said they were already looking for ways to cut their energy spend, with 79% doing so actively (30% very actively, 49% somewhat actively). Only 4% said they were not looking at all. Younger New Zealanders were the most likely to be actively looking.
- The most common action already taken because of energy costs was driving less or combining errands into fewer trips (65%), followed by reducing heating or hot water use (49%), cutting back on holiday road trips (44%), and delaying or cancelling travel plans (32%). Just 14% had done none of these. Older New Zealanders were the most likely to have cut back on driving.
- 79% thought it likely that fuel prices would get more expensive before they improved (32% very likely, 47% somewhat likely), against 11% who thought it unlikely. A further 10% were unsure.

Impact of rising fuel costs on household budget

Over the past six months, how much impact, if any, have rising fuel costs had on your household budget? (%)



Rising fuel costs hit those with children harder, 87% reported a major or moderate impact.

Women reported slightly more impact (80%) than men (73%).

Renters (80%) and those with a mortgage (82%) felt more of an impact than mortgage-free homeowners (69%).

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Base: NZ Adults (n=1,017)

Biggest energy spending reduction opportunity

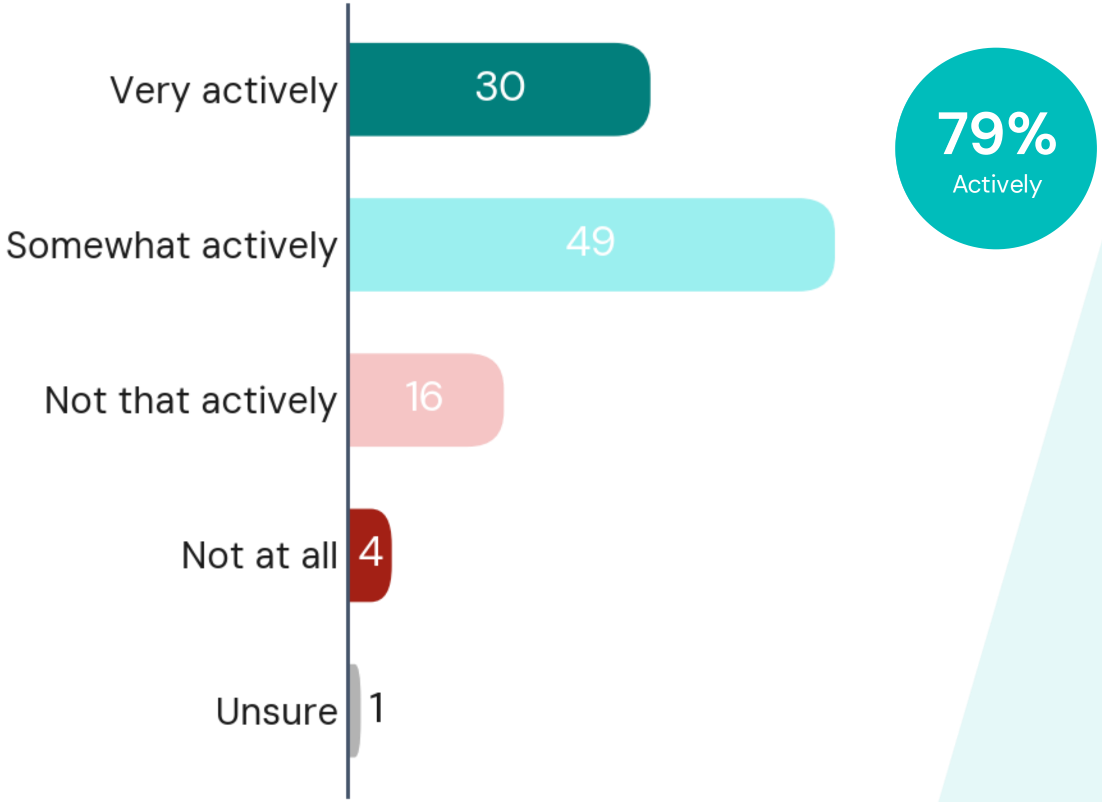
What is the biggest change you think you could make to reduce the amount you spend on energy (including power, gas and fuel for transport)? (%)

Coded theme	%
Drive less or combine trips – Drive less, reduce unnecessary car trips, combine errands into one trip, carpool, drive only when necessary, avoid extra journeys, plan routes more efficiently	25%
Reduce general energy consumption – Use less, use sparingly, reduce usage, cut back on energy use, be energy conscious, be mindful of usage, turn things off when not in use, switch off appliances at the wall, turn off lights, consumed less, use energy wisely	18%
Use public transport or active travel – Use public transport, catch the bus, take the train, walk more, cycle, bike to work, walk to work, walk instead of driving	18%
Reduce heating or hot water use – Don't turn on heating, be cold at home, wear warmer clothing, layer up, turn heating down, shorter showers, turn off hot water cylinder, reduce shower length, lower hot water temperature, use heat pump less, don't use heaters	13%
Use appliances off-peak or more efficiently – Shift electricity use to off-peak hours, use power during free hour, overnight washing, dishwasher on overnight, cook in bulk, use microwave, don't use dryer so often, replace with energy-efficient appliances, energy-saving bulbs	7%
Already doing everything possible – Already doing the best I can, already do a lot, already don't use much, already stopped using car other than essentials, already as careful as I can be, can't think of anything, do enough already, no change needed	6%
Nothing or no change intended – Nothing, no change, do not intend to make any change, not worth it, I haven't changed	6%
Stay home or go out less – Stay home, stay at home, don't go out as much, don't leave the property, not being home as much, going out less, never leave the house	5%
Install solar panels – Get solar panels, add solar power, install solar, use solar at house, switch to solar water heaters	4%
Government or market intervention needed – Change in government, more regulation, reduce taxes on petroleum, energy companies should reduce cost, cheaper petrol, change the electricity market, Commerce Commission action, government action, power companies gouging us	3%
Reduce spending or consumption generally – Cut down on spending, buy less groceries, eat less food, reduce other expenses, decreasing all spending, budget money, eat out less	3%
Switch to electric vehicle – Buy an electric car, buy an EV, buy electric, drive hybrid car more, electrify everything	3%
Improve home energy efficiency – Double glazing windows, install insulation and heat pumps, new fridge with good seals, choose energy-efficient appliances, close doors to rooms and only heat room in use	2%
Change energy provider or plan – Shop around, change supplier, change to cheaper one, change power plan, switch to company with free power hours, compare and switch power plans	2%
Work from home – Work from home, working from home to save fuel, reduce commuting	2%
Unsure	8%

Base: NZ Adults (n=1,017)

Household energy spending reduction efforts

How actively, if at all, are you currently looking for ways to reduce the amount your household spends on energy (including power, gas and fuel for transport)? (%)



Younger respondents were more likely to be actively (very/somewhat) looking for ways to reduce their spend:

18-29:	84%
30-44:	83%
45-59:	72%
60+:	76%

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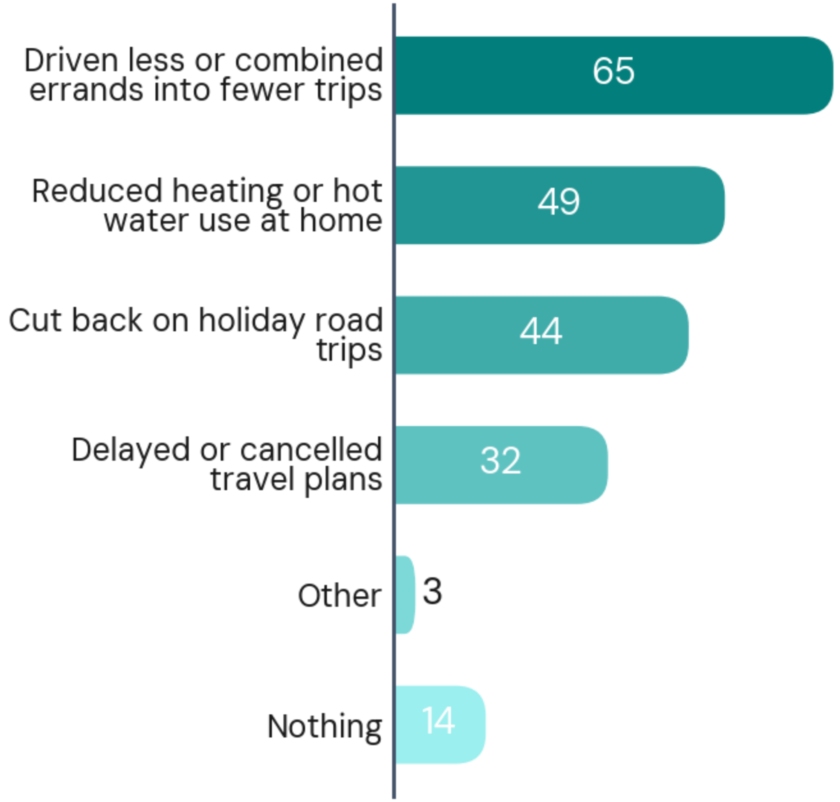
Base: NZ Adults (n=1,017)

Household actions taken due to energy costs

Which of the following, if any, have you done in the past six months because of energy costs? (%)



Older respondents were more likely to report driving less:

18-29:	57%
30-44:	64%
45-59:	65%
60+:	72%

Women more likely than men to reduce heating or hot water (54% vs 44%).

Households with children more likely to cut back on holiday road trips (53% vs 40% without children).

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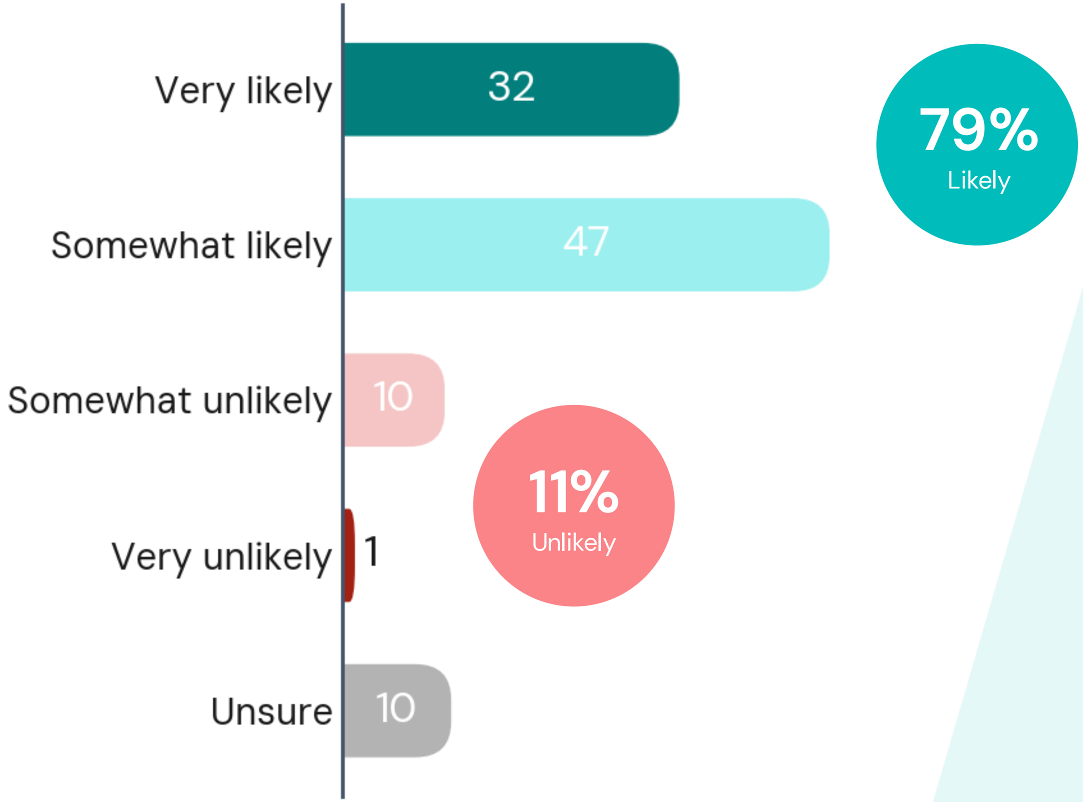
Base: NZ Adults (n=1,017)

Expectations of fuel price increases

How likely do you think it is that fuel prices will get more expensive before they improve? (%)



Younger New Zealanders more optimistic about timing:

18-29:	85% likely / 11% unlikely
30-44:	80% / 10%
45-59:	76% / 11%
60+:	76% / 12%

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Base: NZ Adults (n=1,017)

Transport and travel

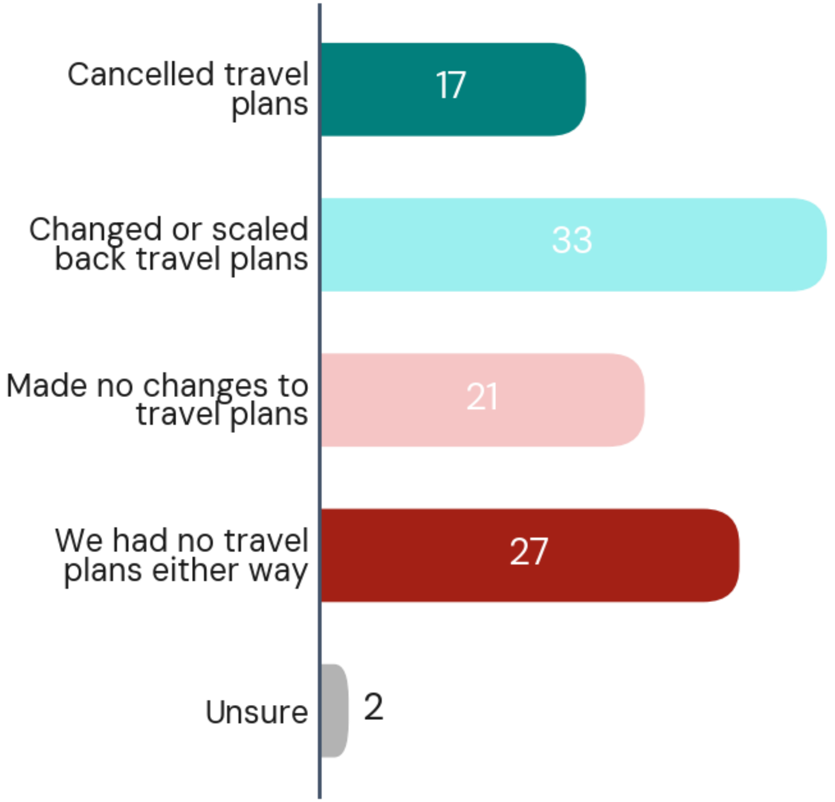
Commentary

Petrol prices were reshaping travel decisions, with half changing or cancelling holiday plans. Cost was the main barrier to switching to electric transport.

- Half of New Zealanders said petrol prices had led them to cancel (17%) or change (33%) their holiday travel in the past six months. 21% made no changes, and 27% had no travel plans either way.
- Among those who commute, 42% said rising transport costs had changed how often they commuted, though this was split between 28% commuting less often and 14% commuting more often. A majority (56%) said their commuting frequency had not changed.
- 63% said they were doing at least one thing more often because of rising fuel prices, led by walking or cycling (40%) and public transport (26%). Car-pooling (15%), e-bikes (10%), and e-scooters (6%) followed, while 34% reported doing nothing more.
- The single biggest barrier to switching to, or using more, electric transport was the upfront cost, cited by 44%. Well behind were not feeling a need to switch (14%), worries about driving range (11%), and a lack of charging infrastructure (11% combined, at home or in public). Younger New Zealanders were more likely than older respondents to point to charging infrastructure rather than cost.
- Younger New Zealanders were consistently the most affected by petrol prices and the most likely to change how they travelled. 86% of those under 30 said they were doing at least one thing differently because of fuel costs, against 63% overall.

Holiday travel changes due to petrol prices

Thinking about holiday travel in the past six months, which of the following best describes what you have done because of petrol prices? (%)



Younger New Zealanders were more likely to have cancelled or changed their travel plans because of petrol prices:

18-29:	61%
30-44:	54%
45-59:	47%
60+:	41%

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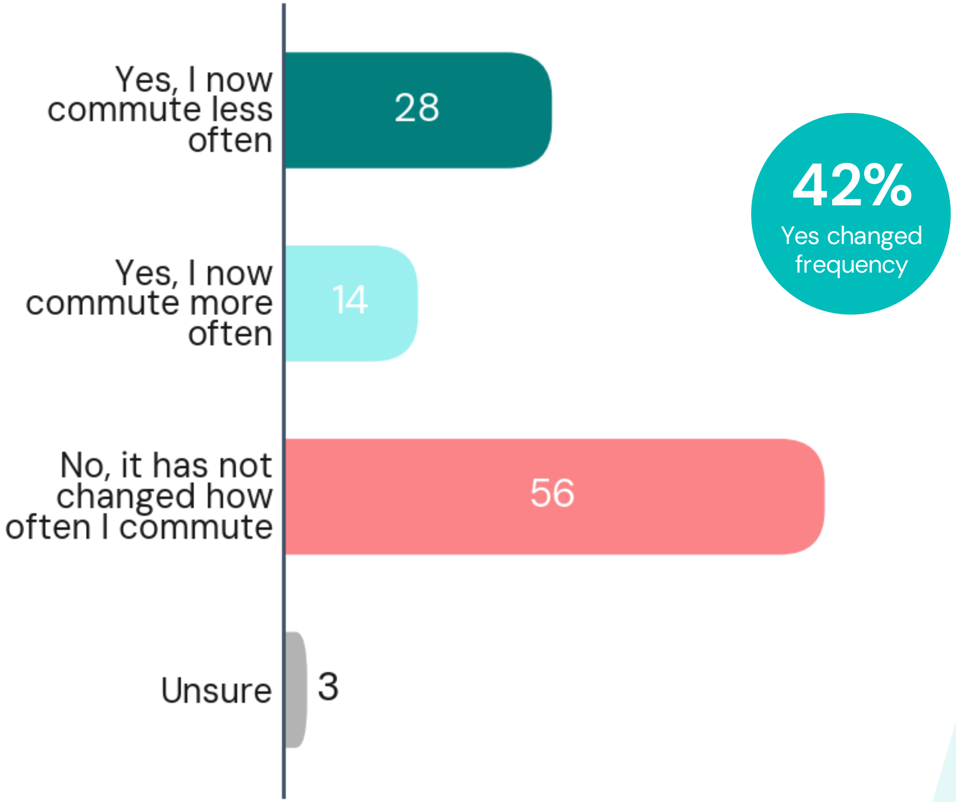
Base: NZ Adults (n=1,017)

Impact of transport costs on commute frequency

Have rising transport costs changed how often you commute to a workplace in the past six months? (%)



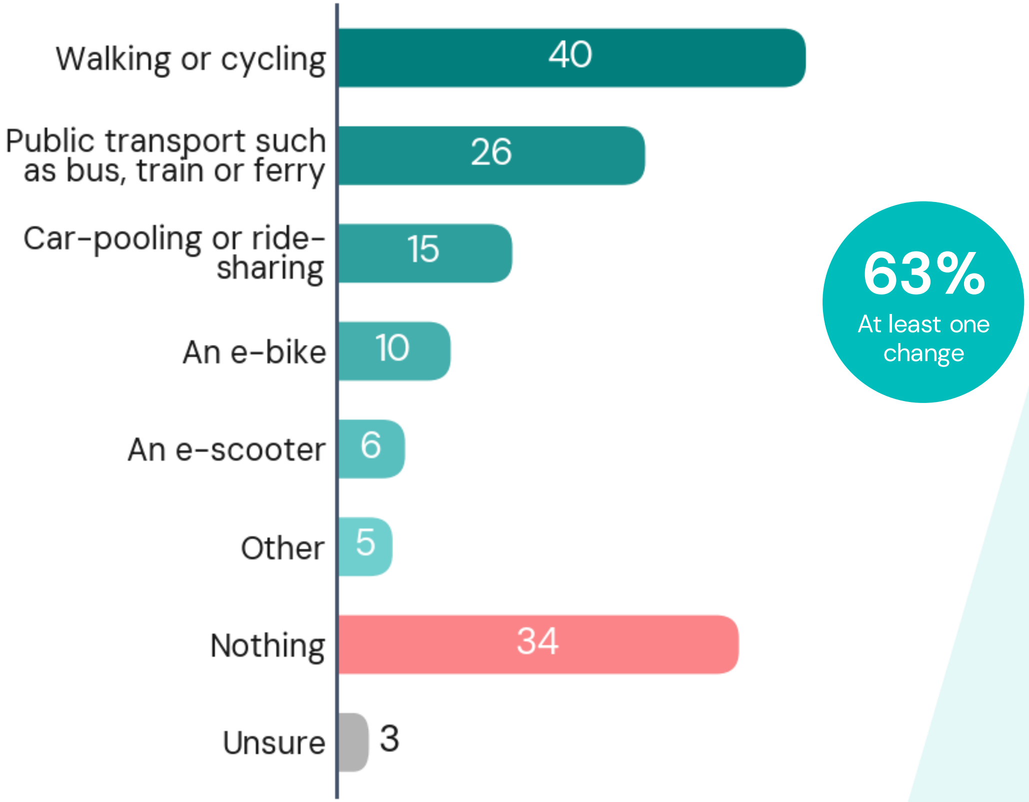
Younger commuters more likely to increase travel:

18-29:	23% less / 31% more often
30-44:	30% / 11%
45-59:	28% / 6%
60+:	32% / 4%

Base: Those who commute (Excludes missing) (n=697)

Behaviour changes due to rising fuel prices

Thinking about the past year, which of the following, if any, are you doing more of because of increasing fuel prices? (%)



Younger New Zealanders led the shift away from cars due to rising fuel prices:

18-29:	86% made changes
30-44:	62%
45-59:	51%
60+:	56%

Those aged 18-29 were notably more likely to increase use of public transport (39%), car-pooling (34%), e-bikes (19%), and e-scooters (15%).

Men were more likely than women to adopt e-bikes (16% / 4%).

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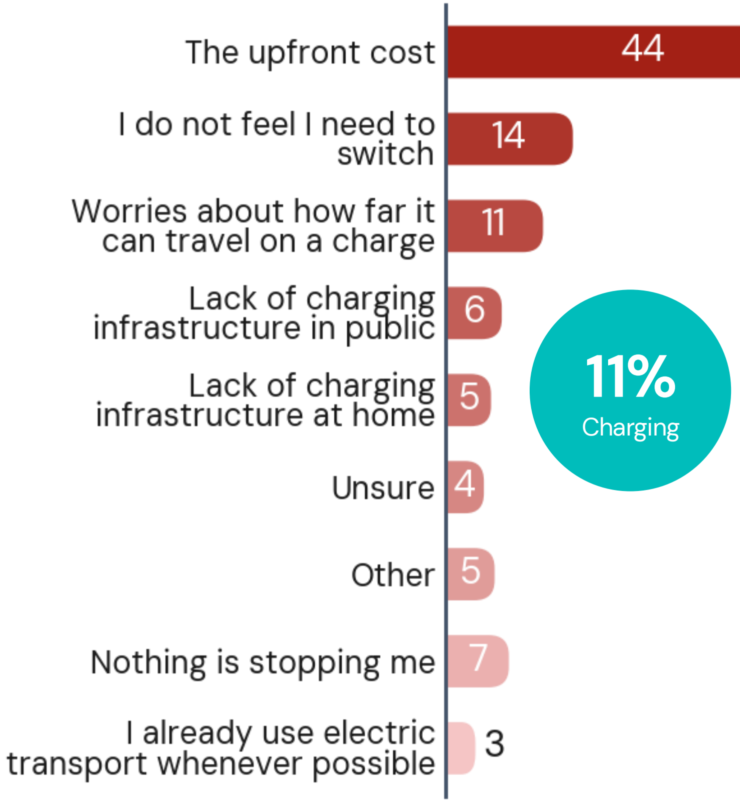
Base: NZ Adults (n=1,017)

Barriers to switching to electric transport

What is the single BIGGEST barrier, if any, to you switching to (or using more) electric transport such as an EV or e-bike? (%)



Younger New Zealanders cited charging infrastructure more often:

18-29: 30% upfront cost / 25% total charging infrastructure
30-44: 45% / 13%
45-59: 50% / 8%
60+: 47% / 3%

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Base: NZ Adults (n=1,017)

Knowledge and confidence

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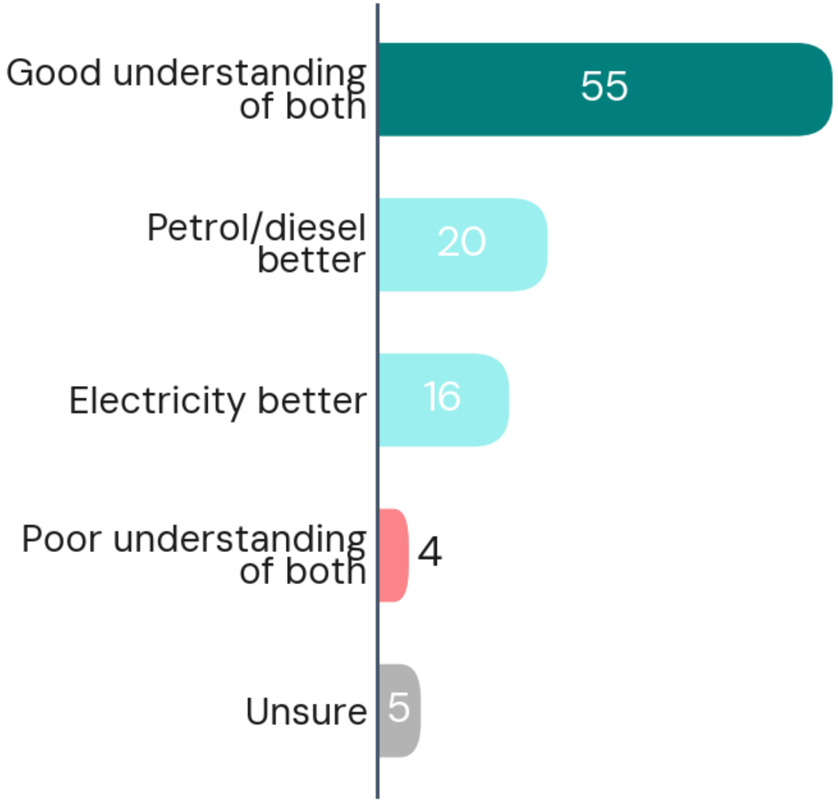
Commentary

Most New Zealanders felt they understood their energy costs and knew where to start saving. Awareness of specific options was high, but few had used tools to work out the savings.

- 55% said they had a good understanding of both their petrol or diesel spend and their electricity spend. A further 20% understood their petrol or diesel spend better and 16% their electricity spend better, while just 4% reported a poor understanding of both.
- Around three quarters (74%) said they would know where to start if they wanted to reduce their energy spend, against 14% who would not and 12% who were unsure.
- With bills expected to rise over winter, 84% said they were clear on the steps they could take now to manage their energy use (33% very clear, 52% moderately clear). 13% were not clear.
- Declared awareness of specific options was high. 81% said they were aware of free power hours offered by some providers before today, 69% of off-peak or time-of-use pricing, and 67% of the running costs of petrol, hybrid, and electric vehicles. Awareness was lower for changing the time of day they heat their water (58%) and for the annual savings from rooftop solar (42%).
- Far fewer had used an online tool or calculator to work out potential savings. 37% had done so for electric appliances, falling to 24% for solar panels, 22% for an electric vehicle, and 19% for a household battery. Younger New Zealanders were the most likely to have used these tools.
- A clear generational divide ran through the section. Older New Zealanders consistently felt they understood their costs better, knew where to start, and were clearer on what to do, with a good understanding of both petrol and electricity spend.
- 60% felt they had a real ability to make changes to reduce their household's energy costs, against 28% who did not and 13% who were unsure.

Understanding of petrol versus electricity spending

Thinking about your monthly spending cost, would you say you understand your petrol/diesel spend or your electricity spend better? (%)



Clear generational divide in understanding of monthly costs:

18-29:	33% both
30-44:	52%
45-59:	54%
60+:	74%

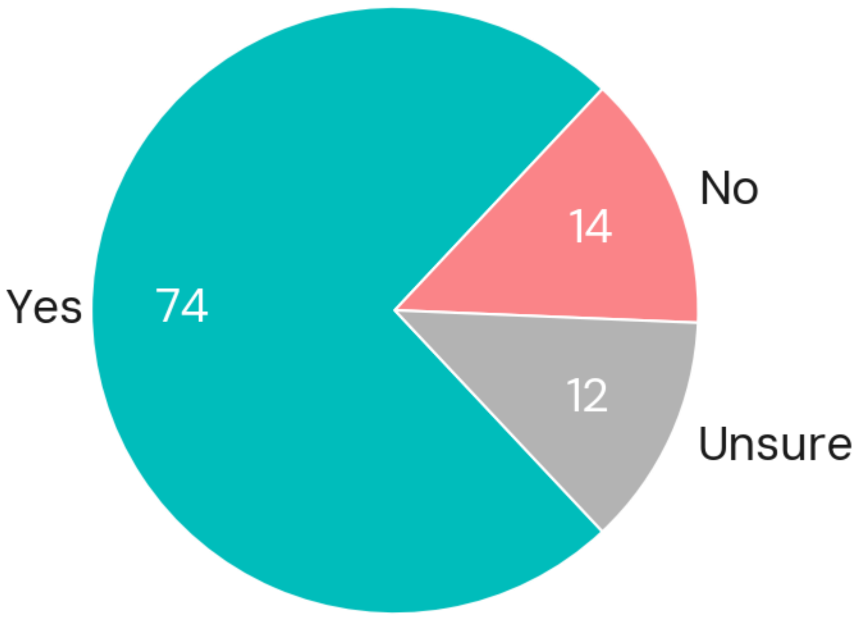
Men more likely to say they understand electricity better (23%), women more likely to understand petrol/diesel better (23%).

Renters less likely to understand both (44%) compared to homeowners with mortgages (58%) or without (61%).

Base: NZ Adults (n=1,017)

Knowledge of energy cost reduction options

If you wanted to reduce the amount you spend on energy, would you know where to start? (%)



Older New Zealanders were more confident about where to start:

18-29:	67%
30-44:	67%
45-59:	76%
60+:	84%

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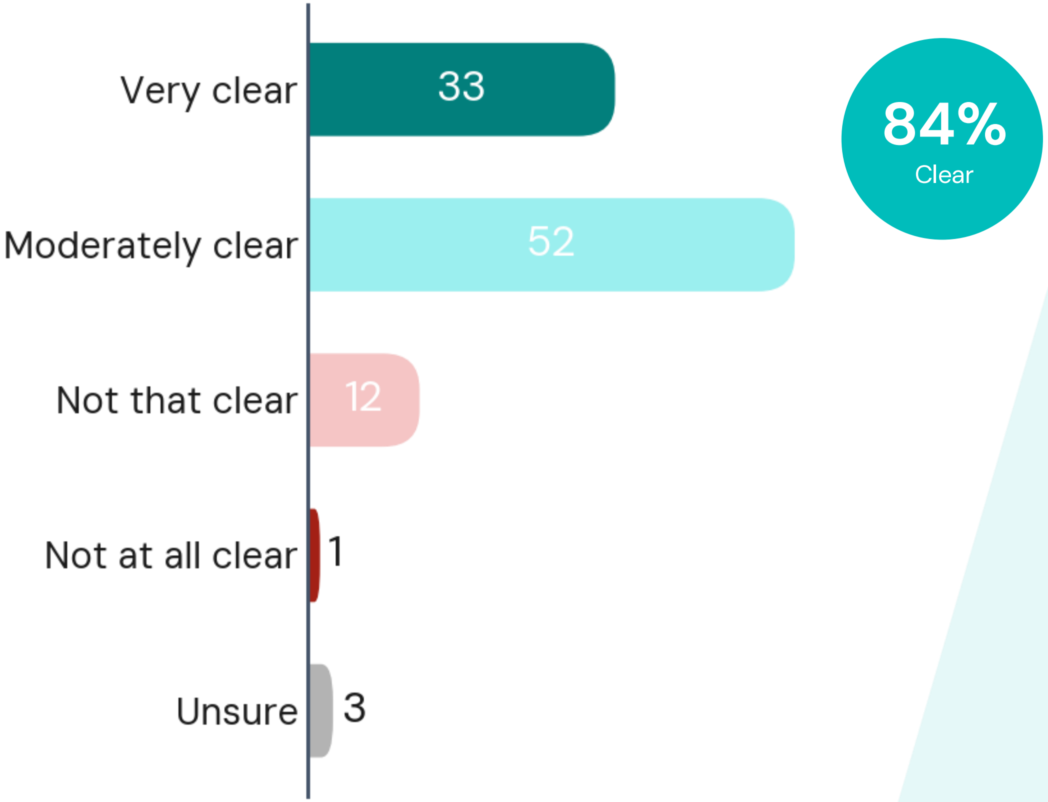
Base: NZ Adults (n=1,017)

Clarity on managing energy use

With household energy bills expected to rise over winter, how clear are you on what steps you could take now to manage your energy use? (%)



Older New Zealanders felt clearest on energy management steps:

18-29:	23% very clear / 81% total clear
30-44:	24% / 79%
45-59:	35% / 85%
60+:	45% / 91%

Men more clear (36% very clear / 88% total) than women (29% / 81%).

Outright homeowners also more clear (41% very clear / 89% total) than those with mortgages (27% / 82%) and those renting (31% / 84%).

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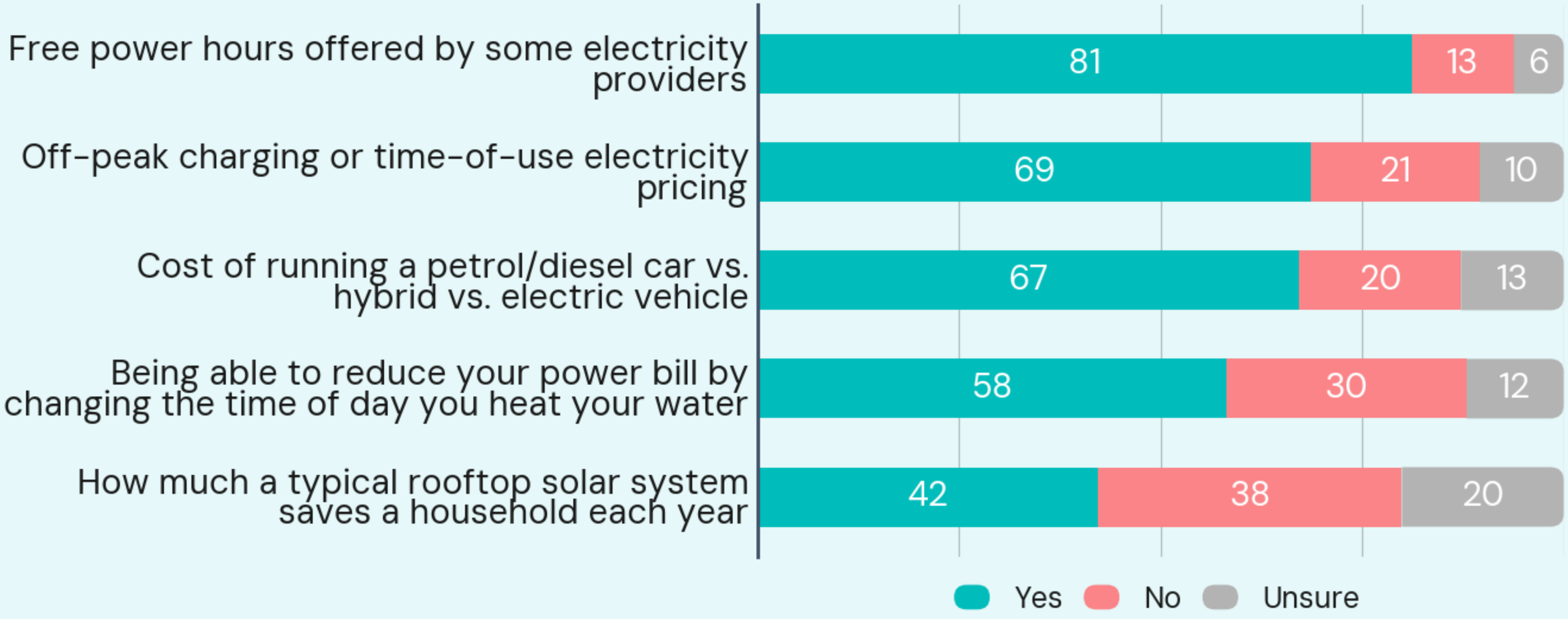
Base: NZ Adults (n=1,017)

Declared awareness of energy and vehicle cost-saving options

Which of the following were you aware of before today? (%)



Those aged 60+ were more likely to say they were aware of time of day water heating (68%) and off-peak charging (79%).

Those who own their home outright showed higher awareness of water heating (69% vs 58% total).

Those in small regional or rural areas were more likely to be aware of free power hours (91%).

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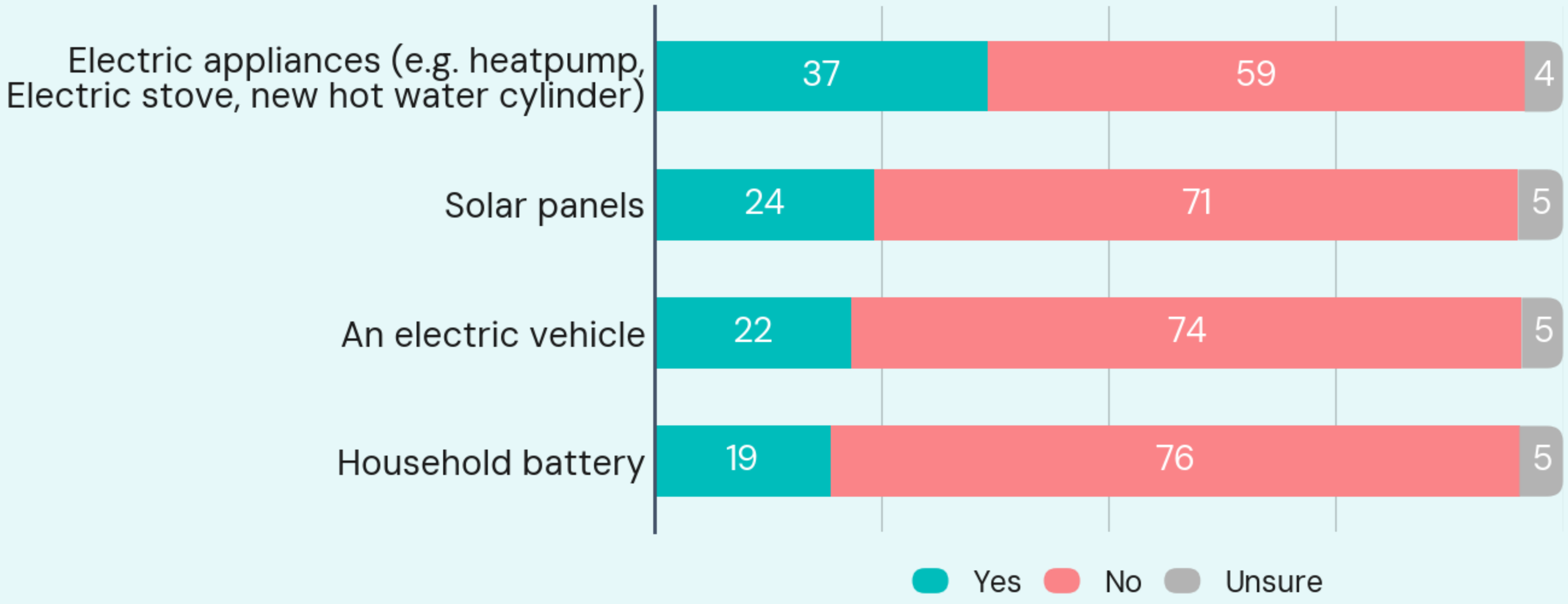
Base: NZ Adults (n=1,017)

Usage of savings calculators for green technology

Have you ever used an online tool or calculator to work out how much you could save by using the following? (%)



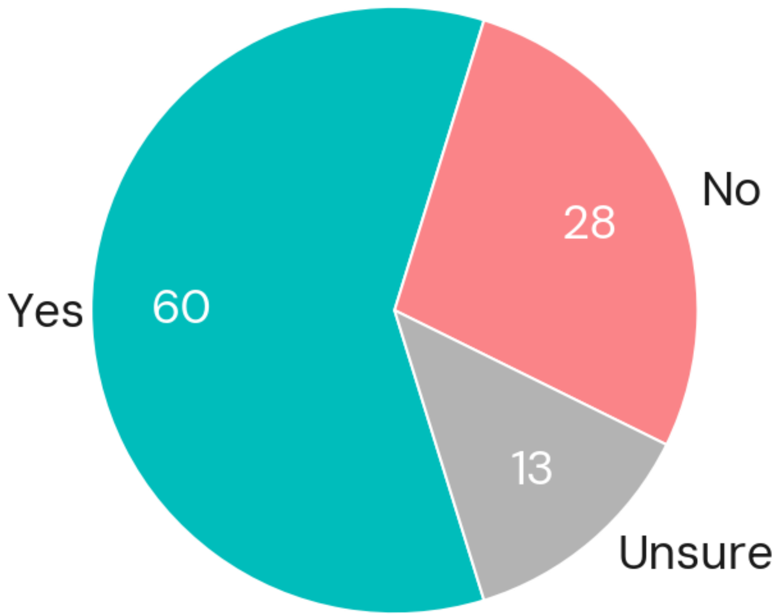
Younger New Zealanders (under 30) were much more likely to have used these calculators (51% appliances / 40% solar / 39% EVs / 37% batteries).

Men were more likely than women across all categories, particularly for solar panels (32% / 16%), EVs (28% / 15%), and batteries (27% / 12%).

Those on lower household incomes (<$50k) were less likely to have explored solar, EVs, or battery options (11%, 10%, 10% respectively).

Perceived ability to reduce energy costs

Do you feel you have real ability to make changes to reduce your household's energy costs? (%)



Those under 30 felt more empowered to reduce energy costs:

18-29:	67% yes
30-44:	54%
45-59:	58%
60+:	60%

Men more likely to feel able (65% yes) than women (55%).

Renters and outright homeowners more confident (64% and 66% yes respectively) than those with mortgages (52%).

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Base: NZ Adults (n=1,017)

Energy solutions

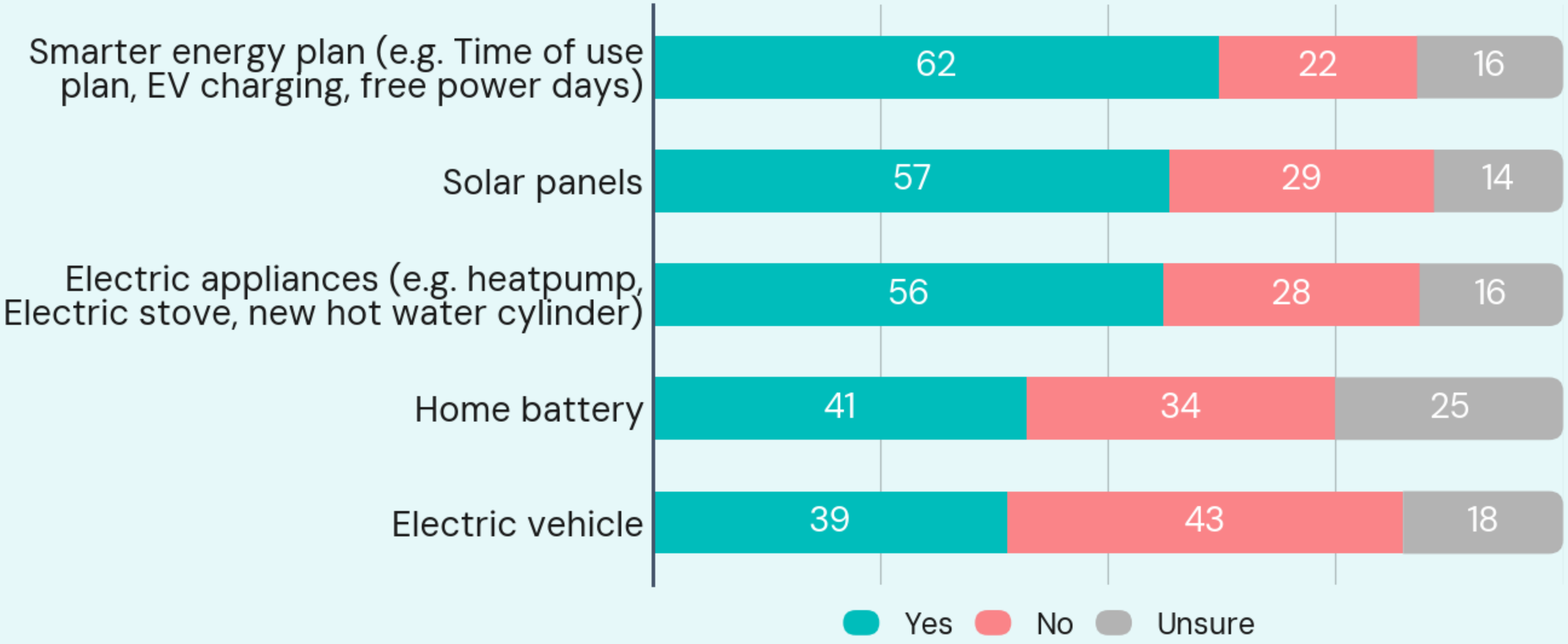
Commentary

Smarter plans and solar held the widest appeal, and intentions for the year ahead were modest.

- Smarter energy plans had the widest appeal as something that would make people feel better about future energy costs, with 62% saying yes, followed by solar panels (57%) and electric appliances (56%).
- Home batteries (41%) and electric vehicles (39%) had narrower appeal.
- Intentions for the year ahead were strongest for everyday changes.
- 53% had already done or were likely to switch to electric appliances and 51% to change the time of day they heat their water, while 47% were likely to switch energy plans.
- Larger investments drew more hesitation, with 61% unlikely to install solar panels and 63% unlikely to switch to an electric vehicle.

Measures to ease energy cost concerns

Would getting each of the following make you feel better about your future energy costs? (%)



Those with dependent children showed stronger interest across all items (70% smarter plans / 66% solar / 69% electric appliances / 51% batteries / 54% EVs).

Men were more interested in home batteries (50%) than women (33%).

Those aged 30-44 were more interested in home batteries (51%) and EVs (53%).

Mortgage holders were more interested in home batteries (50%) than outright owners (37%) or renters (38%).

Asian respondents were more interested in smarter energy plans (76%) and EVs (53%).

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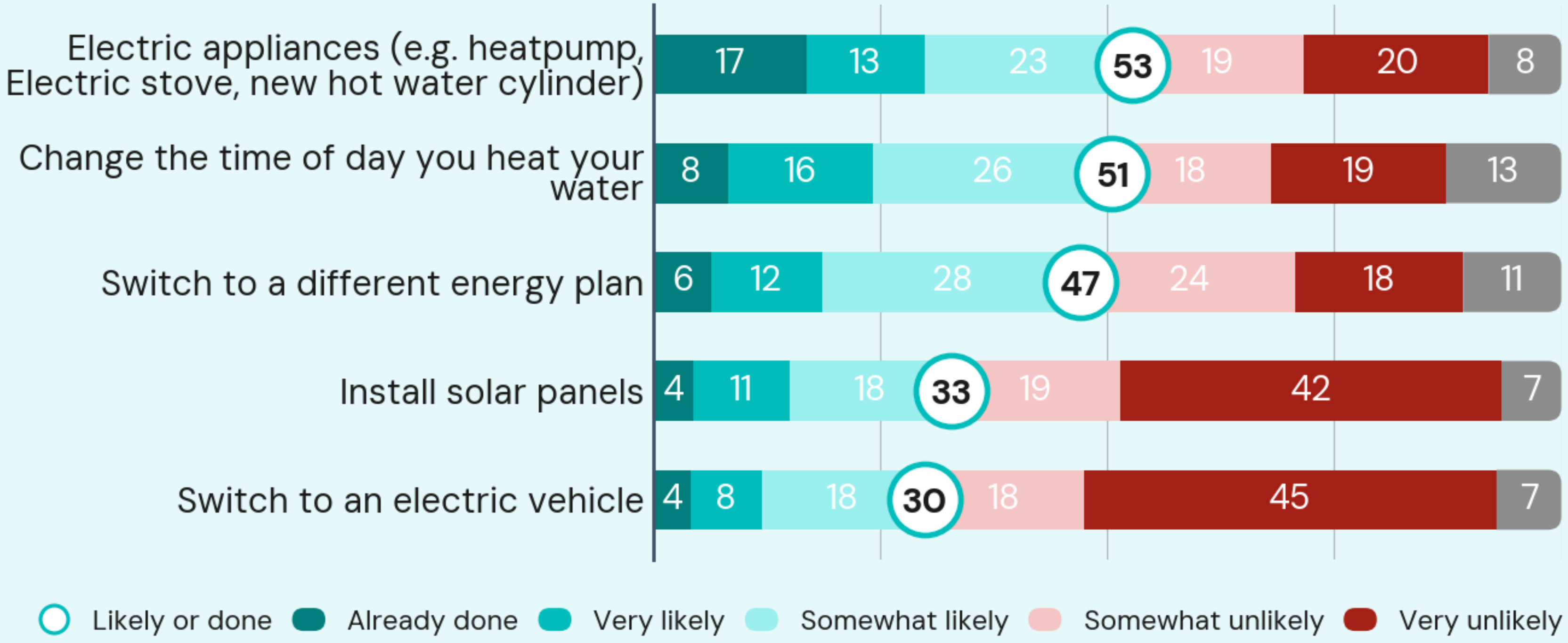
Base: NZ Adults (n=1,017)

Likelihood of energy-related actions

How likely are you to do the following within the next year? (%)



Younger adults (under 30) showed stronger intent across all actions (64% electric appliances / 69% water timing / 57% energy plan / 58% solar / 49% EV).

Men were more likely than women for solar (40% / 26%) and EVs (38% / 22%).

Those in small/medium regional centres were more likely to show intent for solar (41%), while those in small regional centres/rural were less likely on EVs (22%).

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Base: NZ Adults (n=1,017)

About Talbot Mills Research

Talbot Mills Research specialises in corporate, social, and political research.

Our experience spans a wide range of sectors globally including politics, infrastructure, energy, transport, the primary sector, financial services, and public policy.

Talbot Mills Research principals, David Talbot and Stephen Mills, have had roles in strategy at the highest levels of politics and business.

David was pollster to New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, and now works for a range of Australian Federal and State political leaders as well as decision-makers in many listed companies.

As a firm, Talbot Mills Research is regularly cited in international media and have been the most accurate pollsters in many Australasian races.

We use our deep understanding of the public mindset to provide trusted research-based information and advice to corporate and political decision-makers around the world.

The team at Talbot Mills Research offer a full range of methodologies to measure public sentiment and are unique in having the strategic expertise to help build interventions to shift it.

Offices are located in New Zealand (Wellington, Auckland), Australia (Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, Canberra, Perth), and the UK (London).

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