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Press release

The sixth yearly Energie-Info survey on the opening of markets

Five years after opening energy markets to competition, energy costs remain a major concern for households in a context of economic and social crisis. 97% of French people expect a rise in prices over the next few months and 42% of households reduced their heating during the winter to limit their bills. However, the level of knowledge consumers have of the market remains low: only 48% know that they can change energy supplier and only 32% know that EDF and GDF SUEZ are two competing companies.

French interest in energy consumption-related issues is increasing. Thus, while the effects of the economic and social crisis are increasingly felt, nearly 8 out of 10 households reported that energy consumption was a matter of great concern for them which is the highest proportion since the survey's creation in 2007. 65% of French people believe that their energy bills represent a significant share of total household expenditure.

In this context, 42% of households said they reduced their heating during the winter to limit their bills; the over 65s (49%) being particularly affected by this problem. 11% admitted having had difficulties in paying some electricity or gas bills.

Pessimistic expectations on energy price rises are added to this as almost all households surveyed (97%) expect an increase in prices over the next few months.

Although 56% of French people consider themselves well informed, the majority feeling hides real ignorance of how energy markets operate. Although their number is increasing, only 48% of households know they can change energy supplier.

Finally, a third of consumers have heard of regulated sales tariffs. 65% said that they had never heard of them. Over two-thirds of French people wrongly believe that regulated tariffs can be obtained for gas and electricity from the same supplier. This confusion also exists about incumbent suppliers: only 32% of consumers know that EDF and GDF SUEZ are two competing companies.

Almost two thirds of respondents (64%) believe that it is preferable to have a single supplier for electricity and natural gas. Indeed they sometimes wrongly think that purchasing the two from a single supplier would either provide cheaper rates (29% of households) or not change the price (41%).

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As in previous years, the main reason for changing supplier is more competitive pricing. The "timidity" of the market, only 9% of French people say they have already changed supplier, can be explained by the fact that regulated tariffs are perceived as being either cheaper than market offers (35%) or at the same price (34 %). They also appear more stable over time despite this not actually being the case.

The solution considered to enable consumers to adapt to sustainably expensive energy is progressive pricing. 61% of households believe that this system will encourage them to reduce their consumption. The same percentage believes it would benefit the environment and that this principle would be a good solution for people in financial difficulty. However, half of French people are sceptical about its impact on prices as 50% believe that progressive pricing would increase energy bills.

Find the results of this survey on: www.energie-mediateur.fr and www.cre.fr

Key figures:

79%
of households consider energy as a major concern
(Against 75% in 2011 and 70% in 2010)

97%
of households expect a rise in prices over the next few months

42%
of households reduced their heating during the winter to limit their bills

48%
of households know that they can change energy supplier

32%
of households know that EDF and GDF Suez are two different competing companies
In September 2012, the National Ombudsman and the Regulatory Commission of Energy launched the sixth annual survey on the opening of markets. This telephone survey conducted by the CSA institute collected the opinions of 1,503 French households.

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