

## Media Release: Behaviour Survey Results

Published: Tuesday, 19 Dec 2023

**More consumers going 'green', embracing EVs, electrical devices and turning off gas**

**First comprehensive survey of electricity consumer behaviour released**

One third of consumers and small businesses are thinking about buying an electric vehicle in the next 12 months, and nearly a third of households on mains gas are likely to switch to electric appliances in the next 5 to 10 years.

The findings are from the Consumer Advocacy Council's first annual survey that asks households and small businesses about their electricity use and how it may change.

“We found consumers are already making changes in their electricity consumption, often prompted by a desire to cut costs and reduce environmental impacts,” said Council Chair Deborah Hart.

“The survey shows how much life is changing for many with households doing more activities at home, including cooking, and working, and so are using more power at home than previously. In the next 5 to 10 years, 3 out of 4 households expect someone to be at home most days from Monday to Friday.”

The Verian Electricity Consumer Behaviour Survey found a significant proportion of consumers are planning to replace gas or petrol-powered devices with electric ones.

Over the next 5 to 10 years:

- Almost half of consumers think their home will have switched to mostly electric power tools and equipment, such as electric lawnmowers
- 4 out of 10 think their household will have an electric car and a similar number think they will have an electric bike / scooter / motorbike
- About a third of those with mains gas expect to swap gas appliances for electric appliances.

The survey also found most households and small businesses were interested in using smart devices to manage energy bills.

“Not surprisingly, higher income households are more likely to invest in these, and therefore are more likely to benefit from the energy savings available,” said Hart.

“This means those on lower incomes, who would benefit most, are disadvantaged because they can’t afford to buy these devices.

“While interest in energy saving technology was high, there was little appetite to let power companies take control of future smart appliances.

“In the next few years, we’re likely to see more smart appliances that have the potential to be linked to your electricity retailer who can run them at off-peak times when power is cheaper.

“Close to half of consumers and small businesses were open to using these appliances. But most wanted to retain control of them.”

Hart said this was understandable, given many consumers cannot easily change when they use appliances and do not want to lose control of what happens in their homes.

“Our survey found many consumers and businesses would find it hard to switch to using large appliances at off-peak times when power can be cheaper.”

1 in 5 consumers thought it would be difficult to switch to off-peak use for appliances such as washing machines and dishwashers. About a third of residential consumers and half of small businesses said it would be hard to change when they used air conditioning for heating or cooling.

“Electricity is essential for daily life and business and these findings highlight some of the challenges regulators, government and the sector need to consider as they make changes that impact consumers.

“Retailers need to understand what is possible for consumers when considering using pricing to change behaviour.

“We need to incentivise consumers to change, but we don’t want to penalise those who can’t take advantage of off-peak use. For example, shift workers who could be on lower incomes or businesses who simply need to use electricity during the hours their business is open would not be able to take advantage of low off-peak rates.”

Hart said the findings highlighted the importance of understanding the electricity needs of consumers as the country makes the switch to more renewable generation.

“Consumers must be front and centre of decisions about the shape of our electricity system and how we deliver affordable, reliable and sustainable power for everyone.”