



Melbourne Institute & Roy Morgan Taking the Pulse of the Nation

Taking The Pulse of the Nation

Informing Australian economic & social policy.

A Melbourne Institute & Roy Morgan partnership

Taking the Pulse of the Nation (TTPN) surveys the Australian population to capture their sentiments and behaviours related to current economic and social issues.

Since 2020, the Taking the Pulse of the Nation (TTPN) survey has collected compelling information on the changing behaviours and attitudes of Australians. Together, Melbourne Institute and Roy Morgan understand the value in capturing the voices of Australians on the issues that matter right now. We use this information to create expert analyses to directly inform social and economic policies for our Nation.

This survey data is available to the public upon request. Please [contact us](#) for more information and access.

To address rising energy costs, Australians want long-term solutions from the government rather than temporary reliefs

In Australia, the recent soaring energy prices have made it difficult for many residents to cool or heat their homes sufficiently and to pay their energy bills on time, resulting in many Australians being pushed into energy poverty. The United Nations' *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* outlined 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the seventh committing to ensuring “access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all”, but Australia is still lagging behind.

In December 2022, the Taking the Pulse of the Nation (TTPN) survey asked Australians on their ability to meet daily energy needs, their strategies to deal with high energy costs, and on what they expect from the government to assist with rising energy costs.

One in five Australians are unable to heat or cool their home to a comfortable level

Rising energy costs have meant that a fifth of Australians can't afford to adequately use their heating or cooling due to a shortage of money (*Figure 1 – see Melbourne Institute TTPN website portal*), with the disadvantage being more pronounced for those who are financially stressed.

The proportion of Australians unable to heat or cool their homes is almost four times higher among those in financial stress compared to those not in financial stress. Young adults (32%) and those earning below \$50,000 annually (32%) are most at risk of being unable to heat or cool their houses.

Those in financial stress are changing their behaviour to lower energy costs & save money

When asked how they're responding to recent and predicted future increases in electricity and gas prices, a large portion of Australians (36%) have changed the heating and/or cooling setting of their homes to lower energy costs and save money (*Figure 2 – see Melbourne Institute TTPN website portal*).

Most young adults aged 18-34 and those earning below \$50,000 annually reduced their consumption of hot water.

However, those who are financially stressed are doing it even tougher. About half of individuals who are financially stressed are taking almost all possible measures available to them to reduce energy costs and save money. These include using less hot water, changing heating and/or cooling settings, and reducing the amount of time spent on using kitchen and other electrical appliances.

Australians are going without meals or eating less to pay energy bills

12% of respondents reported having skipped a meal or eaten less to be able to pay their energy bills (*Figure 3 – see Melbourne Institute TTPN website portal*). This percentage is even higher for those who are financially stressed (35%), earning below \$50,000 (23%) or are aged between 18-34 (23%).

Demand is increasing for installation of solar panels

Roughly 29% of Australians have installed or are considering installing solar panels in their homes to lower their energy and/or fuel costs in the future (*Figure 4 – see Melbourne Institute website portal*).

However, despite having higher incidence of energy poverty among those who are financially stressed, earning less than \$50,000 and those between 18-34 years old, the majority of them do not intend to undertake future energy-saving options.

These options include installing solar panels, improving their home's insulation, upgrading to a new, more energy efficient appliances or buying a smaller, more fuel-efficient car in order to lower their energy and/or fuel costs in the future. This can largely be attributed to high cost associated with making these changes.

Australians want the government to intervene with long-term solutions

With respect to the most important measures the government should take to assist households with rising energy costs, most Australians want the government to intervene with long-term solutions rather than providing temporary relief.

About 45% of Australians believe the government should invest in or subsidise the development of more renewable energy sources (e.g., solar, wind, hydro) instead of one-time transfers to household to help alleviate energy poverty (17%) (*Figure 5 – see Melbourne Institute website portal*). Many Australians also want to see government intervention with price controls or caps on energy market prices, and investment in nuclear technologies and power infrastructure.

Stronger and more relevant government policies to reduce energy poverty are clearly required. If left unchecked too long, the persistence of energy poverty is likely to bring about negative health impacts on individuals and, in turn, on economic development.

While most Australians are committed to reducing their energy bills, they expect the government to provide them a more conducive environment to do so. Investments in the development of more renewable energy sources won't only make it easier to access by a higher portion of people but would also be good for Australian household budgets and the climate in general.

Author: [Dr. Kushneel Prakash](#), Melbourne Postdoctoral Fellow, Melbourne Institute: Applied Economic & Social Research, 2 February 2023.

Contact: melb-inst@unimelb.edu.au

About Taking the Pulse of the Nation:

*This report is based on a total of 1,000 adult respondents from data collected in December 2022. Respondents are deemed to be in financial stress if they report feeling 'moderately' or 'very' financially stressed in terms of paying for essential goods and services such as bills, rents, and mortgages.

**Beginning in April 2020, the Taking the Pulse of the Nation (TTPN) was conceptualised and implemented by a group of researchers at the Melbourne Institute: Applied Economic & Social Research.

In 2022, the Melbourne Institute and Roy Morgan formed a partnership to extend the running of the TTPN. Each wave includes a set of core questions, as well as additional questions that address current and emerging issues facing Australians.

The sample is stratified to reflect the Australian adult population in terms of age, gender, and location. The TTPN Survey uses a repeated cross-sectional design. If you are interested in adding questions to the survey or accessing the data, please contact us at: melb-inst@unimelb.edu.au.

To view all Melbourne Institute – Roy Morgan Taking The Pulse of the Nation Reports visit the TTPN website portal: <https://melbourneinstitute.unimelb.edu.au/data/taking-the-pulse-of-the-nation-2022>.