



Department  
of Energy &  
Climate Change

# DECC Public Attitudes Tracker survey – Wave 9

Summary of headline findings

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# DECC Public Attitudes Tracker survey

In March 2012 the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) launched a tracking survey to understand and monitor public attitudes to the Department's main business priorities. The Public Attitudes Tracker consists of one annual survey every March and three shorter surveys, in June, September and December, which repeat subset of questions where we think attitudes might shift quickly or be influenced by seasonal factors. New questions are generally piloted in the shorter surveys.

This report presents summary headline findings from the third annual survey (wave 9) and primarily makes comparisons with previous annual waves: March 2013 (wave 5) and March 2012 (wave 1). In some cases, for example when questions were rephrased or introduced in later waves, comparisons are made with other waves.

The ninth wave of data was collected between 26 and 30 March 2014 using face-to-face in-home interviews with a representative sample of 2,040 UK households. The March 2014 questionnaire was in most respects the same as that used in March 2012 (wave 1). Where questions had been rephrased in July 2012 (wave 2) the revised version is used here; some small adjustments were made to align questions with other DECC tracking surveys. Please refer to the full technical note for full details.

This summary provides selected headlines and highlights statistically significant differences between wave 9 and previous waves. Please refer to the Excel summary tables for a full comparison of wave 9 findings with the results of earlier waves.

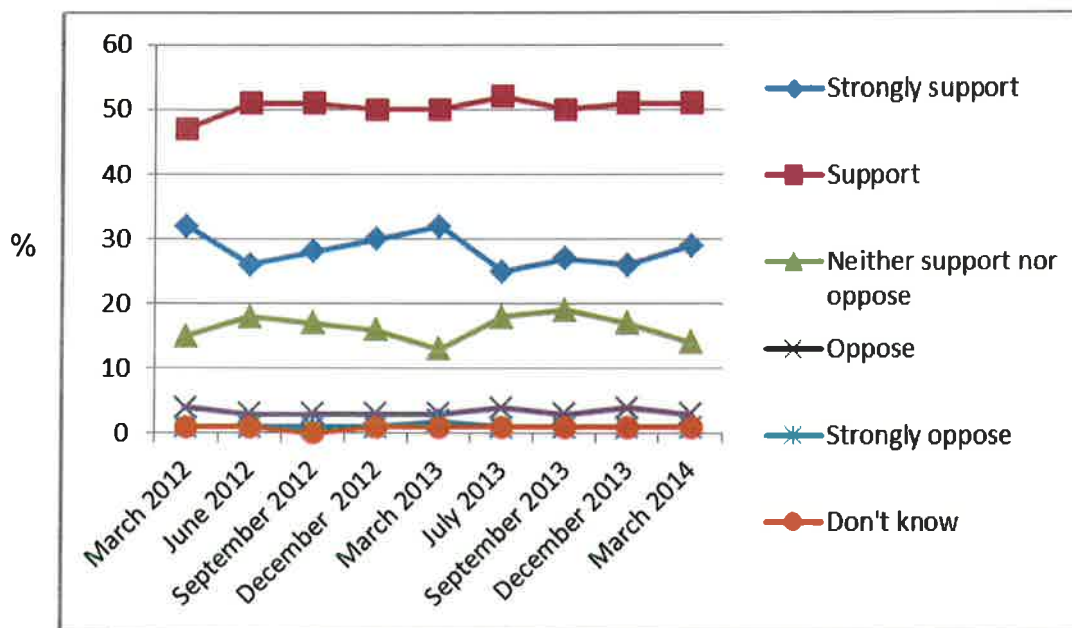
# Summary of headline findings

## Mix of energy sources

### Consistently strong support for renewable energy

- In March 2014, four fifths of the public (80%) said they supported the use of renewable energy to provide the UK's electricity, fuel and heat, unchanged over the past two years (82% in March 2013 and 79% in March 2012).

**Figure 1. Change in level of support for using renewable energy to provide the UK's electricity, fuel and heat, March 2012 to March 2014**



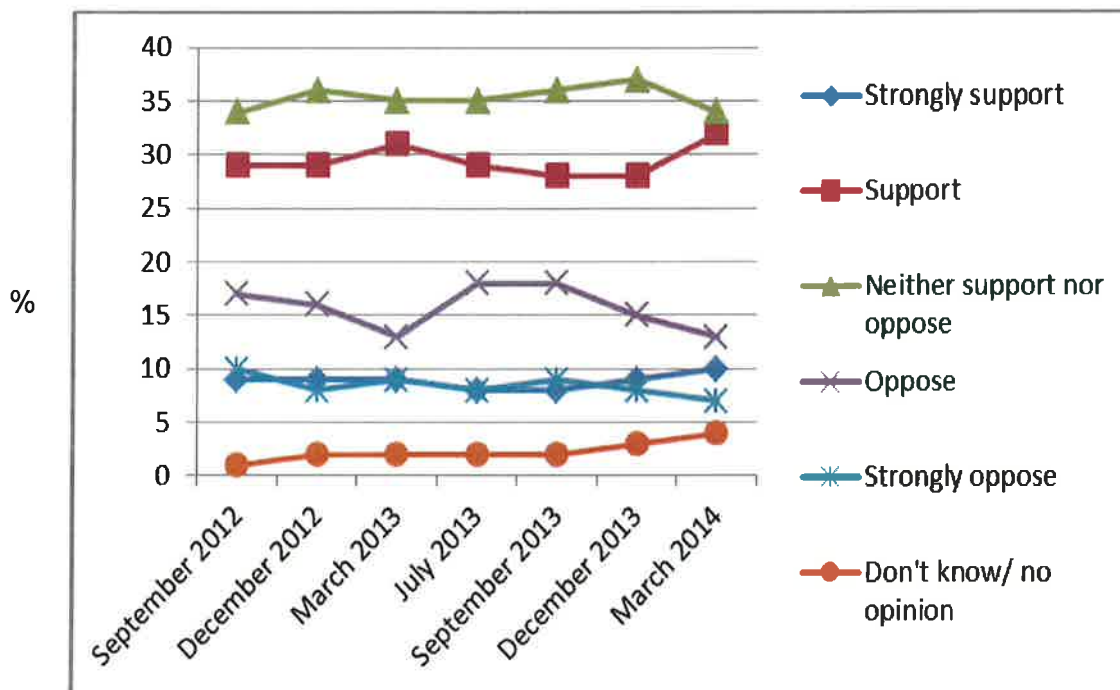
Base: c2,000 UK adults

- Six in ten people (59%) said in March 2014 they would be happy to have a large scale renewable energy development in their area, consistent with 56% in March 2013 and 55% in March 2012.

### Nuclear energy: level of support broadly constant

- Support for using nuclear energy to generate the UK's electricity is broadly constant but there have been some significant changes. 42% of UK adults supported nuclear energy in March 2014, a significant increase compared with September 2012 (38%)<sup>1</sup>, when the question was first asked in its current form. Opposition fell significantly over the same period, from 27% in September 2012 to 20% in March 2014). A third of people (34%) took a neutral stance in both March 2014 and September 2012.

**Figure 2. Change in level of support for using nuclear energy to generate the UK's electricity, September 2012 to March 2014.**



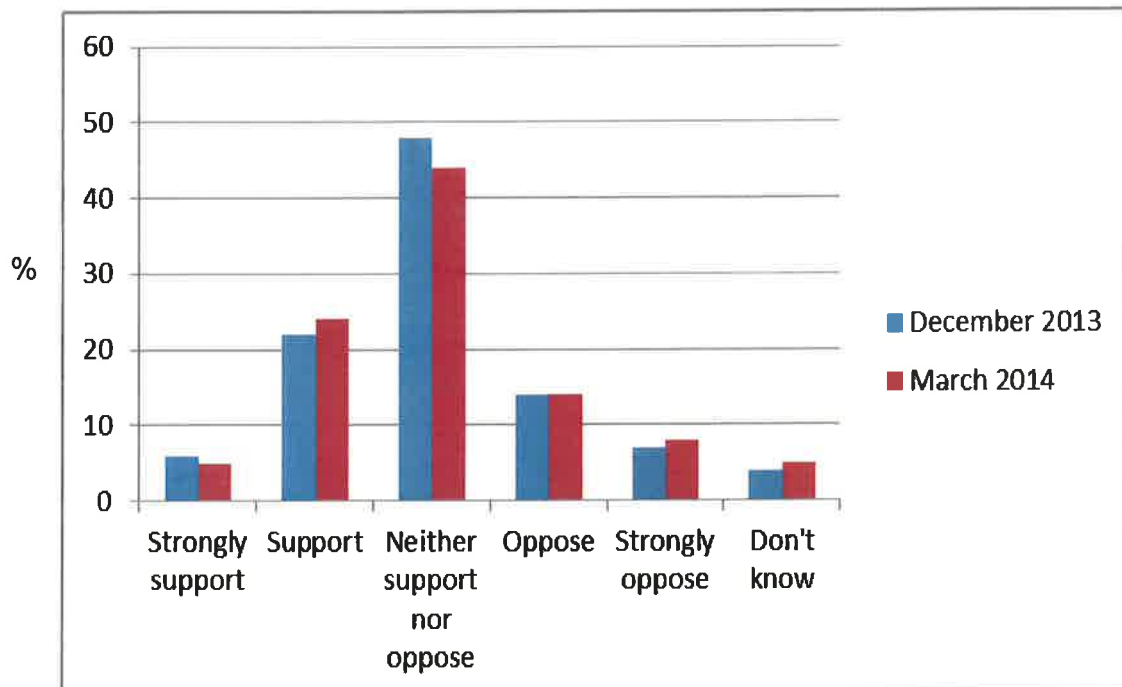
Base: c2,000 UK adults

### Shale gas: awareness levels rising

- Three quarters of the public (75%) were to some degree aware of hydraulic fracturing for shale gas (fracking) in March 2014, a significant increase since March 2013 (52%) and June 2012 (42%), when the question was first asked.
- In March 2014, three in ten people (29%) supported the extraction of shale gas to generate the UK's heat and electricity, compared to 27% when the question was first asked in December 2013. There was a significant decrease in the proportion of people who took a neutral stance on the issue, down from 48% in December 2013 to 44% in March 2014. A fifth were opposed to shale gas extraction in March 2014 (22%) and December 2013 (21%).

<sup>1</sup> September 2012 is used as the baseline here as the question was substantially rephrased at that stage (wave 3)

**Figure 3. Level of support for the extraction of shale gas to generate the UK's heat and electricity, December 2013 and March 2014<sup>2</sup>**



Base: c2,000 UK adults

### **Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS): consistent support among those who are aware of CCS**

- In March 2014 four in ten people (40%) were aware of CCS technology, a significant increase compared to March 2012 (36%).
- 57% of those who knew a lot or a little about CCS technology said they support its use, both in March 2014 and March 2013, when the question was first asked.

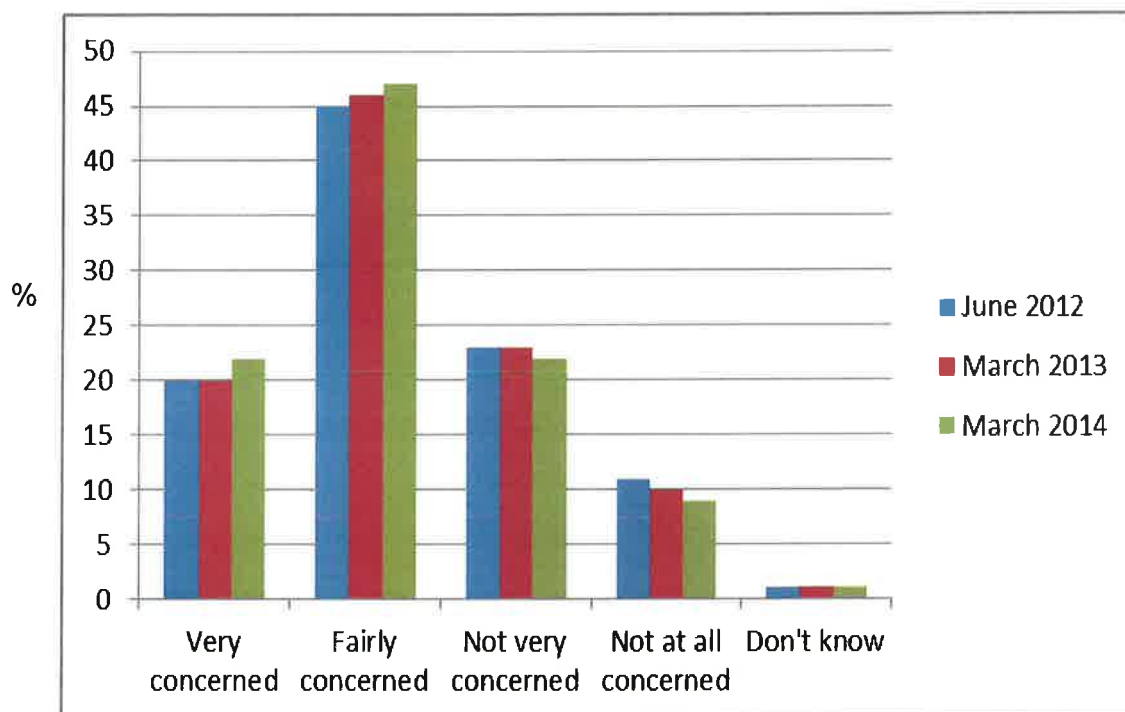
### **Climate change and energy security**

- Energy security and climate change are now ranked joint fourth in a list of the biggest challenge facing the UK today, up from eighth and ninth places respectively in March 2012. In March 2014 8% of households said security of energy supply and climate change were the biggest challenges facing the UK, significantly higher than 3% (energy security) and 2% (climate change) in March 2012.
- Concern about the future cost of energy remains high when the question is asked directly. In March 2014, more than eight in ten (85%) households were very or fairly concerned about steep rises in energy prices in the future, consistent with March 2013 (88%) and July 2012 (84%).

<sup>2</sup> Question was introduced in December 2013

- In March 2014 two thirds of people (68%), when asked directly, said they were very or fairly concerned about climate change, a similar proportion to March 2013 (66%) and July 2012 (65%). There has been a significant decrease in the proportion of people who attribute climate change to human activity, from 38% in March 2013 and July 2012, to 35% in March 2014.

**Figure 4. Change in level of concern about climate change when asked directly, June 2012 to March 2014**



Base: 2,040 UK adults, March 2014

## Energy bills and switching

- The proportion of people very or fairly concerned about paying their energy bills was significantly lower in March 2014 (49%) than in March 2013 (59%) and March 2012 (56%). This is likely to be partly attributable to the milder winter in 2013-14, however concern about all areas of expenditure surveyed has fallen since March 2013.
- 38% of people said they will or may switch energy supplier in the next 12 months, compared with 35% in March 2013 and 33% in March 2012.
- In March 2014 a third of people (32%) had heard of collective switching, up from 27% in March 2013 and 21% in March 2012. Four in ten (40%) expressed an interest in joining a collective switching scheme in March 2014, compared to 42% in March 2013 and 34% in March 2012.

## Home energy use and energy saving

- There has been little overall change in the way people say they use energy at home. However, in March 2014, 46% of households said they leave the heating on when they go out for a few hours, a significant decrease since March 2013 (52%) but consistent with March 2012 (47%).
- In March 2014 fewer people (48%) said they leave lights on when they are not in a room, down from 52% in both March 2013 and March 2012.
- Awareness of smart meters is rising, with two thirds of households (62%) saying they have one or have heard of them in March 2014, up from 53% in March 2013 and 47% in March 2012.

## Technical notes

The results shown here are based on 2,040 face-to-face in-home interviews conducted with a representative sample of UK adults aged 16+. Fieldwork was conducted between 26 and 30 March 2014 on the TNS UK Omnibus, which uses a random location quota sampling method.

The questionnaire was designed by DECC and TNS BMRB drawing on a number of questions from previous surveys. Questions were refined through cognitive testing.

The representativeness of the data was controlled through sample design, fieldwork quotas and post-fieldwork weighting. Data were weighted for the following characteristics: sex, age, social grade, region and tenure. Results included here are based on weighted data.

Please refer to the full technical note at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/public-attitudes-tracking-survey> for further details.





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