



BEIS Public Attitudes Tracker Review - Response Form

The consultation is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/public-attitudes-tracking-survey>

The closing date for responses is **18th March 2018**.

Please return completed forms to:

Customer Insight Team, Central Analysis
Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy,
1 Floor Area Orchard 1,
1 Victoria Street,
London, SW1H 0ET

Email: BEISPAT@beis.gov.uk

Please be aware that we intend to publish all responses to this consultation.

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information may be subject to publication or release to other parties or to disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes. Please see the consultation document for further information.

If you want information, including personal data, that you provide to be treated as confidential, please explain to us below why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information, we shall take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the department.

I want my response to be treated as confidential

Comments:

Questions

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- | | Respondent type |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Business representative organisation/trade body |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Central government |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Charity or social enterprise |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Individual |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Large business (over 250 staff) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Legal representative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Local government |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Medium business (50 to 250 staff) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Micro business (up to 9 staff) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Small business (10 to 49 staff) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Trade union or staff association |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (please describe) |

Question 1: How does the tracker add value to you, your research or work?

Open question inviting views on the BEIS Public Attitudes Tracker

Please comment here: Citizens Advice has statutory responsibilities to represent the interests of energy consumers in Great Britain. We use data from the Public Attitudes Tracker to support this work, by monitoring the energy market and using data to guide and sense check our research across a range of areas.

Questions 2: What do you use the tracker for? Please tick all that apply.

Academic research General interest Informing business decisions
 Policy making Other (please state)

Question 3: Which of the publications do you most value? Please tick all those that apply.

Executive Summary Excel Data Tables Raw Data Set

Questionnaire

Question 4: If the frequency of the tracker decreased to either an annual or a biannual (i.e. every 6 months) publication, would this impact you/your work? If Yes, please explain.

Yes - please comment here: No

We recognise that there is a trade off between the frequency of the reporting and the range of areas that can be covered. We also agree that some data collected quarterly could be produced less frequently without harm. However, without clarity over the costs and benefits of the research, it is difficult to give a considered view on whether this is an efficient use of resource. However, we do consider there could be some risks of reporting less frequently for some parts of the survey.

In the energy market in particular, there is a great deal of change currently, including the introduction of the price cap, the implementation of changes following the CMA investigation, and the smart meter rollout. In this context we are concerned that there may be some data which should be tracked more frequently than annually in order to adequately track and understand the impact of policy and technology changes.

There already is a mixed approach in the reporting, with some questions asked quarterly and others only annually, to account for the fact that they change less regularly. We would support the retention of a mixed approach, based on an assessment of the most useful frequency for different questions.

Question 5: What, if any, improvements would you like to see in the way the information is presented?

Please comment here: Citizens Advice feels the information could be presented in a more visually appealing manner, with graphs and infographics used to illustrate key insights. The executive summary in particular would benefit from such additions. This would make the reporting more accessible and impactful for users.

Question 6: What, if any, improvements would you like to see in the methodological information provided in the survey outputs, including the technical note? For example level of detail, clarity of explanation.

Please comment here: We feel the level of methodological information provided is sufficient.

Question 7: Please let us know your thoughts on the proposed additions to the Tracker? (See 1.3.1).

Please comment here: Citizens Advice is supportive of the proposed areas that are included in the consultation, in particular those related to workers rights and consumer issues in other sectors. There is most value in asking survey respondents about things where they are most likely to have sufficient knowledge and/or personal experience to be able to give considered views. BEIS should ensure that questions related to industrial strategy or science are not esoteric, and are collecting information that is of real benefit for policymakers and external organisations working in that area.

On people's rights at work, the survey could include questions on people's labour market status and the impact on people's finances. For example, does being in non-standard employment increase volatility of people's incomes? Additionally, the survey could collect attitudes towards enforcement of people's rights at work.

We also welcome the proposal to survey consumer issues. First, this could include questions on consumer rights, such as people's trust in companies, their knowledge and understanding of their rights and their perceptions of the ease of enforcing those rights. Second, it could include questions about the effectiveness of competition, whether consumers perceive markets as fair and how easy they think it is to get redress from companies. Third, it could include questions about market navigability: perceptions about how easy it is to shop around and whether people understand the prices they pay for goods and services (particularly in the pensions and insurance markets). Finally, the survey could have questions about technology: how frequently consumers use technology (to get the best deal or to help them navigate the market) and how useful they find technology (in getting the best deal or navigating the market).

Question 8: Please let us know your thoughts on the proposed questions to be removed? (See Annex A).

Please comment here: It would be valuable to retain questions 20A and 20B. The reason for this is that finding out to what extent consumers do not understand how they use

energy in their home is still valuable. BEIS projections have suggested that some of the largest policy-driven bill savings in the coming years are expected to be in the area of products policy. The survey therefore needs to understand how consumers perceive the products in their homes. Rather than deleting the questions, we would prefer they were amended to try and break down the categories and get a richer understanding of how consumers perceive their energy use.

Likewise, we see value in retaining Q17B. While BEIS is correct that consumers may not behave as they say they will, their intentions with regards to switching are still useful. For example, this data allows us to understand what proportion of the population could be enticed into switching but aren't currently acting on that reported inclination. On this note, in addition to switching between suppliers, it would also be useful to include questions related to switching tariffs within individual suppliers, as this is another important form of consumer engagement.

It may also be useful to add a question for those who have switched on satisfaction with the switching experience. This may be useful for other sectors too (in particular telecoms) and could provide insight on the success (or failure) of actions being taken in different markets to make switching a better and more reliable process.

Question 9: Please let us know your thoughts on the proposed questions to be amended? (See Annex A).

Please comment here: Q15a-e: this section of the questionnaire appears to focus more on shale gas than other energy technologies. Given the likely marginal proportion of shale gas within the future UK energy supply (compared to renewables, nuclear and CCS) we query whether the number of questions should be more balanced between energy technologies.

For Question 7A, trust related to energy efficiency advice, option 5 could be amended from 'Green Deal assessor' to a more generic 'Energy efficiency assessor', as knowledge of the Green Deal is likely to be low among respondents.

We support the proposed changes to Question 18, however we would prefer that this question provides a multi-select list of options (including an open 'other' option). This list should include Citizens Advice/Citizens Advice Scotland as we are the statutory consumer body for energy.

Question 10: Of the remaining questions in the Tracker, which, if any, are particularly important to you/your work?

Please comment here: Given the breadth of our remit, all of the remaining questions are important. In particular, we are interested in questions which are not covered in similar surveys elsewhere or through publicly available industry information.

Question 11: Which of the following demographic breakdowns do you use?

Connected to mains gas Use mains gas Pensioners living in the home
 Household income Household income is less than £16,000 before tax

X How accommodation is occupied X Illness/disability X Gender X Age
X Urban/rural X Presence of children under 16 X Household size and composition

We use all of the existing breakdowns of data. In addition it may be useful to have breakdowns available according to additional characteristics - for example, whether the consumer has a smart meter or according to how engaged they are with the market (ie have they switched supplier or tariff recently).

Question 12: Please let us know if you have any other comments regarding the Tracker.

Please comment here: We would be interested to see cross-sector comparisons on satisfaction with problem resolution processes if there is sufficient space in the questionnaire. This would require measuring satisfaction with the provider, whether consumers sought other help or redress, and whether they were satisfied with any other help or redress they received.

We would also be keen to see more content on energy efficiency. The Green Deal tracker survey which ran 2013-15 covered a wider range of questions relevant to energy efficiency policy. Now that survey no longer runs, key questions from that survey about attitudes to energy efficiency should be included in this tracker. This will help analyse the effectiveness of new policies to improve energy efficiency.

The tracker does not include questions related to more flexible use of electricity, in particular time of use tariffs, which are expected to increase with the rollout of smart meters. Adding questions on awareness of these products, to supplement those on which appliances use most energy, would help build an understanding of public knowledge and interest in these products, as well as barriers to their adoption.

Do you have any other comments that might aid the consultation process as a whole?

Please use this space for any general comments that you may have, comments on the layout of this consultation would also be welcomed.

The consultation could have been aided by having a single master list of questions that are currently used as an appendix, showing more clearly which questions are asked at which frequency.

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge receipt of individual responses unless you tick the box below.

Please acknowledge this reply

At BEIS we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, would it be okay if we were to contact you again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

Yes

No