

# BOILER BAN



SURVEY RESULTS



## BOILER BAN: PLOTTING THE UK'S TRANSITION TO RENEWABLE HEATING



## MOST UK HOMEOWNERS ARE UNPREPARED FOR THE BAN ON GAS BOILERS SET TO BEGIN IN 2025, ACCORDING TO A NEW SURVEY COMMISSIONED BY THE RSK GROUP.

The responses, drawn from a diverse pool of 2106 homeowners, shed light on the scale of the challenge ahead for the British public as they prepare their homes and for the government as it rolls out this new legislation.

In 2019, the UK government set out a sustainability goal for the coming decades: net-zero emissions by the year 2050.<sup>1</sup> Central to this effort is the phasing out of gas heating systems, which currently form the largest contributor to the UK's carbon footprint. But this necessary transition presents a host of logistical obstacles.

Gas boilers emerged as the most common heating method in British homes during the 20th century, and they are still present in most households. Starting in 2025, gas boilers will be banned in new-build homes, and by 2035 the use of gas boilers in existing structures will also be banned. Almost two in five respondents (**37%**) did not know that the government has set a target that means gas-fired boilers will be banned in newly built homes from 2025, and installing new gas boilers in existing houses will also be banned by the mid-2030s.



To replace these boilers, homeowners will need reliable, efficient technology. The most practical current solution comes in the form of heat pumps, which draw heat from either the surrounding air or the ground below. Although alternative, hydrogen-based solutions are in development, they are not currently ready for public use, and current versions of the technologies still require hydrogen to be mixed with natural gas, thus making them counterproductive to the goal of net-zero emissions.

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-enshrines-new-target-in-law-to-slash-emissions-by-78-by-2035>



## MOST HOMEOWNERS ARE ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT REDUCING THEIR CLIMATE IMPACT, BUT ARE TURNED OFF BY HIGH INSTALLATION COSTS

When it comes to the challenge of replacing gas boilers with environmentally friendly systems, heat pumps come out ahead. These survey results demonstrate the necessity of increased public awareness of both the problem itself and potential solutions.

The installation of sustainable heating solutions in Britain's homes is a crucial step in building a net-zero future. In fact, gas-fired heating is the leading contributor to the UK's carbon emissions – information that came as a surprise to the majority of respondents, particularly those in younger age groups. Most participants entered with the assumption that air and road travel were primarily responsible for the UK's carbon output, and **76%** of them described themselves as 'concerned' when this assumption was corrected.

Though the survey reveals a significant gap in public knowledge about the impact of gas boilers, sustainability advocates should also find encouragement in the results. The majority of homeowners surveyed were supportive, and even enthusiastic, about taking part in efforts to combat the climate crisis. For example, **81%** of homeowners were willing to change the way they heated their homes to reduce their environmental impacts, and **77%** said they were willing to consider new heating methods.

Most participants were theoretically willing to pay up front to install heat-pump systems, provided that their heating expenses decreased as a result. However, most respondents significantly underestimated

the cost of making the switch, and were daunted when they learned that the cost of installing an air source heat pump begins at £7000, and a ground source pump at £15,000 – figures that significantly outstripped their average estimate of £3289. Most respondents would require heavy financial inducements in the form of subsidies to afford such investments. They were also asked how much assistance they would need from the government to make this change; on average, they responded that they would require grants covering **46%** of the costs to persuade them. This figure is much higher than the £4000 grant offered by England's current scheme. To make this vital transition possible for every Briton, the government urgently needs to increase its financial support; **79%** of respondents said they would only install a heat pump if adequately supported by a government grant.





## AGE IS A MAJOR FACTOR IN RESPONDENTS' KNOWLEDGE BASE AND WILLINGNESS TO ADAPT THEIR BEHAVIOUR

Homeowners over the age of 45 were more likely than their younger counterparts to be aware of the impact of gas boilers on the UK's carbon emissions. When this misapprehension was corrected among the respondents, however, those in the younger age groups were more likely to describe themselves as 'concerned' or 'very concerned' than those in the older groups: the figures were **80%** of 16–24-year-olds and **83%** of 25–34-year-olds, compared with **74%** of those over 55. It is possible that the higher level of concern comes, in part, from the element of surprise, as this was new information for so many of the younger respondents.

Younger homeowners tend to be more open to the installation of new heating systems than their older counterparts, at least in the abstract. Thus, **100%** of 16–24-year-olds described themselves as willing to consider buying an alternative heating system; in comparison, the figure was **69%** for those over 55. However, these answers were given before pollsters informed respondents of the estimated cost.

When informed of the cost, the willingness of participants tended to decrease across age groups, but the vast majority (**87%**) of those in the youngest group were still willing to foot the bill if their energy costs decreased. Two-thirds of those over 55 were also willing to make the switch; a lower proportion, certainly, but still a significant majority.





## EXISTING SYSTEMS AND BUY-IN VARY BY REGION



Survey participants were selected from regions across Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and their responses were categorised by region. In some instances, pronounced regional variations emerged.

When it comes to the type of heating system used, respondents in almost every region used gas boilers to heat their homes, but with the notable exception of Northern Ireland, where gas boilers account for just **27%** of heating systems. In contrast, **32%** of homes featured electric storage heaters and another **29%** relied on oil central heating.

Residents of Scotland and Greater London were most likely, at **80%**, to express willingness to purchase a new system. Those surveyed in Wales were more reticent; **69%** of them answered in the affirmative. Although this discrepancy is notable, it still indicates that the vast majority of respondents are open to a transition to zero-emissions heating solutions.

## WHEN IT COMES TO THE TYPE OF HEATING SYSTEM USED, RESPONDENTS IN ALMOST EVERY REGION USED GAS BOILERS TO HEAT THEIR HOMES





## IMPLEMENTATION OF NON-GAS HEATING SYSTEMS WILL REQUIRE INCREASED PUBLIC AWARENESS AND ASSISTANCE

The results of this survey provide reason for both confidence and concern. They paint a picture of a British public that is aware of the urgency of the climate crisis and eager to take action, but that also has an understandable reluctance – or a socio-economic inability – to pay the thousands of pounds required to put new systems into effect.

The fact that so many respondents reacted with surprise to the ban itself, as well as the reasoning behind it, demonstrates that public information sharing is a crucial next step for obtaining full public

support. And decision-makers should be aware that, for most British homeowners, the cost of a complete transition is the most significant barrier to full buy-in.

Because the impact of gas boilers is so catastrophic for the environment, the timeline for the transition to heat pumps is a tight one. Commercial property developers should begin planning now to implement new heat pumps in place of gas boilers, because they offer a safe, long-term solution for keeping Britain's families warm – and the planet safe and resilient – now, and for future generations.





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