

A green energy future

July 17 2013



A team of University researchers have found that a large majority of the British public support moves to an efficient, clean, fair, and safe energy system but distrust remains a concern.

Transforming the UK energy system – public values, attitudes and acceptability brings together the findings from two in-depth phases of research carried out over a period of 30 months; a series of six in-depth deliberative workshops with members of the public held across England, Scotland and Wales, and a nationally representative survey of 2,441 members of the public.

Funded by the UK Energy Research Centre (UKERC) the research was carried out by a team from the University's School of Psychology, Welsh School of Architecture and School of Engineering.

Professor Nick Pidgeon, School of Psychology, who leads the research said: "Our participants saw the bigger picture of energy system transformation, and they were overwhelmingly committed to moving away from [fossil fuels](#) towards renewable forms of [energy production](#) and to lowering energy demand."

The research highlights key factors that are influential in public assessments of proposed changes.

From examining these factors the research shows that publically favourable changes would: be energy efficient rather than wasteful; protect the environment and nature; be reliable, accessible and safe; allow consumers a certain amount of autonomy and power; be socially just and fair; improve on what has gone before; score well in terms of quality and performance; and, fit with a long-term, sustainable trajectory, rather than being just a short-term fix.

"Our research has shown clearly that people are more likely to accept changes that show signs of commitment to their underlying values, such as energy system components that are clean, efficient, fair and safe.

"The public is also keen for policy makers to clarify how current changes to the [energy system](#) fit with longer-term plans, and to develop an intelligible and coherent strategy for this," Professor Pidgeon added.

Some of the other detailed findings in the report include:

- 74% of participants were very or fairly concerned about climate change, while 82% were worried about the UK becoming too

- dependent upon energy from other countries;
- 79% want to see a reduction in the use of fossil fuels over the next few decades; 81% express a desire to reduce their energy use; and support for solar (85%) and wind energy (75%) remains very strong;
 - The public is undecided on the role of nuclear power in the future energy mix. However, over half (54%) still said they would oppose the building of a new nuclear power station in their area;
 - Awareness of new low carbon technologies for the home, such as electric heating using 'heat pumps', was low. The percentage of people willing to use electric heating rose from 42% to 61% if it was posed as matching the performance of current systems and to 85% if it was also presented as cheaper. A majority (53%) were willing to use electric vehicles, rising to 75% if they performed as well as conventional models.

Provided by Cardiff University

Citation: A green energy future (2013, July 17) retrieved 22 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-07-green-energy-future.html>

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