

Consumer Experiences Of Time of Use Tariffs

Report prepared for Consumer Focus

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Executive Summary

- Consumer Focus is the statutory organisation campaigning for a fair deal for consumers in England, Wales, Scotland, and, for postal services, Northern Ireland. It was created through the merger of three consumer organisations –energywatch, Postwatch and the National Consumer Council (including the Welsh and Scottish Consumer Councils).
- Time of use (ToU) tariff users are electricity consumers who are charged different prices according to when the electricity is used. ToU tariffs are sometimes known as “off peak” tariffs and are designed for those who use a lot of electricity at off peak times such as overnight, for example, users of electric storage heating. Primarily through consumer complaints to Consumer Direct¹, Consumer Focus is aware that ToU tariffs are the source of a number of issues and complaints raised by consumers. Consumer Focus wanted to understand more about the kinds of people who use ToU tariffs, who they are most suitable for, the interactions with their heating systems, what problems or issues they encounter, how many of them feel they are on the “wrong” tariff for their needs and whether their experience could be improved by more or better information and advice.
- Research consisted of three waves of omnibus surveys in February and March 2012, which involved a total of 5,914 interviews using a nationally representative methodology, of which 4,761 were conducted with mains electricity customers who were at least jointly responsible for their household bills. Of these, a sub-sample of 620 with ToU tariffs were asked a set of questions about their use of, and attitudes to the tariff. Following this, 15 of them were re-interviewed to explore their experiences of the tariff a little further and in more detail.

Main findings

- The study identifies 13% of domestic electricity bill payers as users of ToU tariffs, primarily Economy7 (66%) and Economy10 (10%)

¹ Consumer Direct is now run by Citizens Advice and since April 2nd 2012 has been known as Citizens Advice Consumer Service

- Just 24% of ToU users have storage heating; 66% have gas central heating. There are some significant differences in the profiles of the two groups.
- The overall demographic profile of all ToU users is closely similar to that of all bill payers, though they are a little more likely to be from ABC1 social grades and of higher income. This is a result of the influence of the large proportion with gas central heating; in fact those with storage heating are notably different in that they are more likely to be lower social grade (C2DE), of lower income, to live in privately rented accommodation and to be either of the very youngest or oldest age groups.
- Only 50% of ToU tariff users deliberately run appliances, other than water and space heating systems, at off peak periods to save money. Of all ToU tariff users, 38% have no storage heating and do not use any appliances at off peak rates, meaning they get no real benefit from the tariff they are on – indeed they are likely to be paying more for their electricity annually as a result.
- While no widespread issues were identified with understanding of meters or billing, and most are satisfied with their ToU tariff, 24% believe their tariff is not right for their household's needs. This rises to 35% among those with no storage heating and no off peak use of appliances.
- The problems are most acute for those with storage heating, among whom 25% are dissatisfied with their heating system, and just 68% are satisfied, compared to 91% of gas central heating users. Just 59% of storage heating users consider it right for their needs, compared to 89% of gas central heating users. Storage heating users are also much less likely to switch supplier than those with gas central heating.
- Overall, 12% of ToU tariff users have been caused considerable upset or discomfort, ill health or financial problems attributed to their tariff or heating system. This rises to 15% among those with storage heating.
- Just over half of ToU tariff users believe additional information or advice would help them make better use of their tariff and heating system. Information on the times it is cheaper to use electricity is likely to be most helpful. Storage heating

users are no more likely to ask for help with using their heating, and less likely to want information about switching supplier.

- ToU tariff users identified by this study, comprised 13% of domestic electricity bill payers, which generated a sample of 620 ToU tariff users for detailed analysis. The vast majority of these (66%) are on an Economy 7 (E7) tariff, and a further 10% are on Economy 10 (E10). Very few consumers on dynamically teleswitched or preserved tariffs (that is pre competition ToU tariffs which are often linked to a consumer's heating system) were interviewed.
- In many respects, the profile of all ToU tariff users is closely similar to that of all electricity consumers. This applies particularly to the age profile, type of home tenure and the proportion who receive benefits, either as a main source of income or as a supplement. There is, however, some significant difference in social grade with ToU tariff users (perhaps counter-intuitively) more likely to be of ABC1 social grades than all bill payers. This "upmarket" bias feeds through to other marginal differences – ToU tariff users are more likely to have a household income of £25,000 or more and more likely to pay for their electricity by direct debit. However the aggregate profile of ToU tariff users obscures the important differences by heating type – those with storage heating are more likely to be of C2DE social grade, lower income, in privately rented accommodation and from the very youngest or oldest age groups than those with gas central heating, who are more likely to be ABC1, higher income, middle aged owner occupiers.
- The geographical distribution of ToU tariff users shows a different pattern to the distribution of electricity bill payers, but one that does reflect some of the regional bias expected by Consumer Focus: notably greater concentrations in the South East (outside London), East Midlands, and the Eastern regions, though there are also more ToU tariff users in the West Midlands than electricity bill payers in general. On the other hand, the penetration in the North West, North East and Wales is notably lower. The penetration of ToU tariff users in Scotland reflects closely the proportion of all bill payers.

- Despite the natural compatibility of electric storage heating with ToU tariffs this is not the dominant method of heating used by consumers with ToU tariffs. Two-thirds of households have gas central heating and only 24% have storage heating. Many of these are relatively old systems: the majority (72%) of installed storage heating systems were inherited by current households; just 21% were fitted for the first time by current householders and 7% were upgraded by them. More than eight in ten of those with storage heating have no mains gas. Around half (52%) of those with storage heating are at home all day during the week and so best able to benefit from the heating. Of the remainder, most work a normal pattern whereby they are only at home in the evening and at the weekends, so storage heating may possibly be less suitable unless they have a high standard of insulation.
- Only half of those households on ToU tariffs run appliances other than storage heaters at cheap rate periods. It is therefore possible to calculate that 38% of those with ToU tariffs have no storage heating and do not use off peak rates to run other appliances, and hence are not making best use of their ToU tariff – indeed they are not on these tariffs for any good reason. Given that daytime unit rates on ToU tariffs are higher than unit rates on standard tariffs (this is offset by much lower rates for off peak times) consumers who are on a ToU tariff but consumer the bulk of their electricity during the day are almost certainly paying more than necessary for their electricity. Energy suppliers calculate that a consumer uses less than 35% - 40% of their electricity at night an off peak tariff would not be right for them.² Following conversations with energy suppliers, Consumer Focus has calculated that the average consumer with no timers or storage type heating uses about 19% of their total electricity at night (eg 12am – 7am) (eg on fridge, freezer and lighting). Therefore a consumer on a ToU tariff with no storage heating with similar consumption patterns to a consumer on a standard single rate tariff could be up to £72 per year worse off than if they were on a standard single rate tariff³. It was mentioned during our case studies that it would be useful to know at what percentage off peak use it becomes cheaper to be on Economy 7. Such information is only of use to the consumer who knows their annual consumption at each rate, and this requires them to understand their bills or read their own meters.

² <http://www.npower.com/Home/electricity-and-gas/types-of-meter/economy7/index.htm>,
<http://www.eonenergy.com/FAQ/Meters/Economy-7-Details.htm>

³ From calculations by Consumer Focus – see appendices

- Among the case studies, the “evangelists” for ToU tariffs are those consumers who understand the systems best and whose lifestyles match them closely. In particular, this applies to retired people and home workers, both of whom may spend a lot of time in the home and give much attention to optimising their power usage. Their homes and daily routines are adapted to using appliances at night (with timers), well insulated and extremely well ordered. Some of their lifestyle adaptations may seem extreme to observers, for example ironing at night, or cooking a meal in the small hours of the morning. There is also a certain price to pay in terms of having this additional anxiety about getting it right, which not everyone has capacity for.
- The case studies imply a wide range of knowledge and competence surrounding electricity metering and bills. The survey indicates that two-thirds (66%) feel they understand their metering and bills at least fairly well, 23% not very well and just 11% not at all well. There is also an indication that all but four percent know how to read their meter, and that 80% do so at least occasionally. The case studies suggest both figures may overstate consumer knowledge and competence, and the sheer variety and complexity of the actual meters at the homes covered by our case studies point to more widespread potential problems with understanding. This is supported by the finding that just under half of ToU tariff users have sought help or advice with metering, billing or heating systems, mostly from their suppliers. As the proportion is no higher for those with storage heating we can assume most issues are more to do with other aspects of the tariff or relationship with supplier, though we do not know how this level of enquiries compares to consumers in general.
- Awareness of options available to ToU tariff users for making their home more energy efficient is led by double glazing, switching off appliances, turning down the heating, insulating the loft and cavity wall insulation. Those with storage heating are less likely to mention most measures (29% say there are no options open to them, compared to just 18% of those with gas central heating). They are also less likely to have, themselves, made any structural improvements to their home to improve energy efficiency (53% have done so, compared to 59% of those with gas central heating). In behavioural terms, those with storage heating are less likely than others to have switched supplier, turned the heating down, tried to use appliances more at cheaper times, bought more efficient appliances and changed their heating system. These differences in awareness and action are largely explained by the different profile of

storage heating users: lower income, lower social grades and a greater propensity to be aged 16-34 or 65+.

- Approximately half of ToU tariff users (51%) claim to have ever tried to switch supplier and 90% of those were successful. The resultant proportion of 49% who have ever switched is somewhat higher than Ofgem recently found for electricity switchers (35%). Switches were made most frequently on the phone or through a salesman and the vast majority (77%) believed that switching had made bills cheaper. While 71% switched with no difficulties, only 8% related difficulties experienced to their off peak rate, whereas 22% related their difficulties to other factors.
- Overall, 84% of ToU tariff users are satisfied with their heating system, though satisfaction is much higher among those with gas central heating (91%) than those with storage heating (68%). In fact, 25% of those with storage heating are dissatisfied with it. Case studies suggest many of those might not ever use it. Just 59% of storage heating users feel it is right for their needs compared to 89% of gas central heating users.
- Those who currently use appliances in off peak periods are generally satisfied with the convenience of it. But many do not do this, for various reasons connected with inconvenience and inconveniencing their neighbours, for example with the noise of appliances running in the middle of the night. The difficulties associated with finding ways to use electricity at night are one factor behind the pessimism some cases feel about their ability to save energy while on the ToU tariff.
- Most ToU tariff users are satisfied with their tariff (70%), though only 10% are “completely” satisfied. The greatest dissatisfaction is among those with storage heating (20% dissatisfied with the tariff, compared to just 9% of those with gas central heating) and many of these consumers are in the youngest 16-34 age group. Despite the dissatisfaction, however, those with storage heating are no more likely than others to claim their ToU tariff is not right for their needs. Overall 24% of ToU tariff users believe they are on the wrong tariff, but among those who do not have storage heating and do not use appliances at off peak times (those for whom the tariff is apparently “unsuitable”) this rises to 35%. However their level of satisfaction with the tariff is only a little lower, and their dissatisfaction is not significantly different from all with ToU tariffs. The case studies suggest that even some of those who are gaining

nothing from their ToU tariff are frequently unaware that it is causing them a problem. In fact they frequently encounter bigger problems with debt, prepayment meters or cold homes.

- While 44% of ToU tariff users have experienced problems of some kind, those of the greatest impact are finding out that they are paying more for electricity than comparable acquaintances, the inability to compare suppliers properly in order to switch, simply being on the wrong tariff and errors made in meter readings or bills. The lack of knowledge of the periods when there is cheaper rate electricity is clearly widespread among our case study respondents (though some have incorrect impressions and do not know it), and applies to 12% of all ToU tariff users, but it has relatively low impact on consumers affected. Overall, 28% of ToU users who have experienced any problems have been caused considerable upset or discomfort, ill health or financial problems because of these problems with their ToU tariff. This represents 12% of **all** ToU tariff users, rising to 15% of those with storage heating.
- The majority of ToU tariff users believe some kind of information or help would make a difference to them in helping them save money. Most popular is information on when it is cheaper to use electricity. Although a low impact problem, this could be an “easy win” as for many ToU tariffs the answer is not complicated. Almost as popular is information on how to compare prices between suppliers. While this is no doubt likely to be a demand for all electricity bill payers as well, there is much evidence that ToU tariff users have a more difficult task in comparing prices. In Ofgem’s 2011 report on Tariff Comparability⁴, prepared by Ipsos MORI, the performance of E7 customers was considerably worse than that of non-E7 customers in choosing the lowest prices from a variety of different tariff models. Those with storage heating are, however, less likely to mention this than those with gas central heating, perhaps reflecting their lower interest in switching and the greater cynicism about switching found among some of the case study interviews.

⁴ Consumer reactions to varying tariff comparability , quantitative research conducted for Ofgem, October 2011
http://www.ofgem.gov.uk/Markets/RetMkts/rmr/Documents1/Tariff_Comparability_Quantitative_Research.pdf

- Few request more information on understanding their bill and meters, how to switch supplier or how to use storage heaters or other appliances off peak; even among those who have storage heaters this last figure is just four percent.

Implications

- This study suggests that most consumers on ToU tariffs are fairly happy with them and do not suffer any detriment. However it can be misleading to consider those on ToU tariffs as a homogeneous consumer group. The dominance of Economy 7 colours the overall findings and obscures the particular issues of some of the very low penetration types of ToU tariffs. This survey is not of a scale to allow us to address these – they would need to be targeted specifically.
- The high proportion of ToU tariff users who have gas central heating is a startling finding, though it was indicated in Consumer Focus' earlier omnibus research⁵. While it seems likely that this is a result of widespread upgrading of home heating systems, particularly among wealthier, higher social grade owner occupiers (some of whom may be ex-council tenants who have bought their own homes) leaving the ToU tariff as a relic, we do not have appropriate data in this study to be able to explore this further.
- However those with storage heating (24%) are a key sub-group and indications are that this contains many reluctant ToU tariff users, typically either young or elderly, low income people in privately rented accommodation who have inherited an old storage heating system. We did not ask specifically whether they **use** their system, but indications are that many do not, because it is expensive, ineffective or complicated. This then adds to their problems as they may have a cold home and also may lead to higher bills as expensive stand alone electrical heaters may be used instead. They are also even less likely than other ToU tariff users to have carried out structural improvements to boost their energy efficiency. These consumers need better guidance on how to make storage heating work properly (though they don't recognise they do) and help with replacing or improving redundant equipment.

⁵ A face to face Omnibus survey of 3931 adults carried out for Consumer Focus by TNS RI on 15th – 24th October 2011 found that 63.7% of ToU customers had gas central heating as their main heating source

- We also identify 38% of ToU users who have no reason to be on this tariff. While many seem to be quite happy to continue with it, it is likely that they are actually spending more on their electricity than they strictly need to and are getting poor value for money. These consumers need guidance on how to get the best from their ToU tariff, and, eventually, will need help with switching tariff and/or meters.

By contrast, we also identify some consumers for whom ToU tariffs work well because of their lifestyle and the energy efficiency of their homes. The examples interviewed in the case studies are mostly retired or home workers but it is conceivable that other types of consumer would also be especially suitable. They need to be the kinds of people who like to exercise a high degree of control over their home economics, have control over the types of appliances and heating systems they can invest in, have the time and inclination to spend thinking about optimum strategies and usually need to be motivated in some external way, for example they may be off the gas grid, they may have to be at home all day, they may use their home as a business workplace, or they may have some innovative form of heating such as a heat pump or microgeneration system. For this small, specialist group of consumers, ToU tariffs, even those more complicated than today's offerings, may have a successful future.

Introduction

Background

Consumer Focus is the statutory organisation campaigning for a fair deal for consumers in England, Wales, Scotland, and, for postal services, Northern Ireland.

Consumer Focus is the voice of the consumer and works to secure a fair deal on their behalf. It was created through the merger of three consumer organisations –Energywatch, Postwatch and the National Consumer Council (including the Welsh and Scottish Consumer Councils). The new approach allows for more joined-up consumer advocacy, with a single organisation speaking with a powerful voice and able to more readily bring cross-sector expertise to issues of concern.

Consumer Focus is one organisation with multiple brands that includes Consumer Focus Scotland, Consumer Focus Wales and Consumer Focus Post, based in Northern Ireland. The organisation aims to use the skills and experience of its staff to become greater than the sum of its parts, across a devolved and United Kingdom context.

Time of Use Tariffs

Time of Use tariffs (ToU tariffs) are billing systems designed to work with special multi rate electricity meters that record electricity usage at different times of the day. Consumers are charged different prices for electricity depending on when it is used. These tariffs are sometimes also known as 'off-peak' or multi rate tariffs.

ToU tariffs are intended to make electricity more affordable for households with storage heating or electric water heating, by metering off-peak electricity. The tariff offers better prices for consumers running these systems, which are designed to run during times when the rate is reduced, usually at night. As such, in order to benefit fully from these tariffs consumers are expected to use the bulk of their electricity during these off peak periods. Storage heating systems are specially designed to use electricity during these cheapest off peak times, mitigating the higher cost of running electrical heating systems.

On the basis of 27.5 million domestic electricity customers in Great Britain, Consumer Focus has estimated that 19.5% of these customers are on a ToU Tariff.⁶

The problem

Consumer Focus is aware that there are several problems that consumers currently have with Time of Use tariffs and that these problems are quite wide-spread; this has relevance not only as a current issue but also in relation to future developments in the energy market.

The mandated roll out of Smart Meters, starting in 2014, will make it possible for suppliers to offer a wider range of ToU tariffs. Therefore Consumer Focus needs to understand the current problems consumers have with these tariffs and as well as consumer awareness of these tariffs and their ability to shift their electricity usage to take advantage of the cheaper off peak rates.

Consumer Focus has identified ToU Tariffs as a possible current source of frustration and confusion among domestic energy consumers. Consumer Direct⁷ receives a significant number of complaints that appear to be related to these Tariffs. The findings revealed that 2,226 consumer contacts were made during the periods of June 2010 to July 2011 about problems relating to ToU Tariffs. An average number of 185 consumers a month called about problems with time of use tariffs.

Consumer Direct does not have a separate category for dealing with complaints about these particular types of Tariff. Therefore complaint data had to be identified manually using a key word search. This means that it is difficult for Consumer Focus to understand the underlying causes of complaints. For example, consumer complaints are split by Consumer Direct so that one centre deals with problems with energy supply, while another deals with complaints about energy hardware such as boilers and heating systems. One of the key issues in getting to the root cause of problems is the confusion evident amongst consumers about whether the problems are related to their heating systems, the ToU tariffs themselves or other factors.

Research objectives

⁶ This is based on data from Elexon of the number of domestic multi rate meters points in Great Britain

⁷ Known as Citizens Advice Consumer Service from April 2nd 2012

Consumer Focus wishes to understand the types of problems that exist with ToU tariffs; understanding of these tariffs among consumers and whether consumers are able to change their electricity usage to take advantage of cheaper off-peak rates.

Overall objectives for the research are to:

- Conduct a nationwide survey, representative of ToU consumers in Great Britain to provide quantitative data at a scale that gives robust measurements
- Add a more in-depth dimension to the national survey by conducting simultaneous qualitative research at a much smaller scale, permitting a more unstructured approach

The specific objectives are to obtain:

- A better understanding of the types of consumers on ToU tariffs and how this profile compares with the wider population
- Appreciation of the problems experienced by consumers, the root causes of these and their implications or knock-on effects – particularly if any consumers are adversely affected by problems with the tariffs
- Understanding of how problems with ToU tariffs and storage heating interact, focusing on whether they are caused by the quality of the system or ineffective usage (or both)
- Understanding the potential impact of energy efficiency measures on these consumers, and how, if at all, this might affect understanding of, and satisfaction with ToU tariffs
- If there are any problems relating to ToU tariffs and certain types of property and whether any customer groups are particularly affected and need to be the target of any assistance
- Understanding of what information or intervention might help to make these tariffs more user friendly, whether from suppliers or third party organisations

- Estimation of the approximate proportion of consumers who are on the “wrong” tariff for their needs
- Understanding of which customers benefit from, and are unsuitable for, ToU tariffs
- An evaluation of consumer understanding and aspirations to help Consumer Focus to formulate proposals for structuring new “smart” ToU tariffs, applicable to different groups of consumers

Methodology

Research commissioned by Consumer Focus⁸ found that around 15% of electricity consumers believe they have ToU tariffs and 17% have cheaper electricity at certain times of the day. When combined these figures suggest a possible 21% who may have some kind of ToU tariff. No specific demographic differences were found between this group and electricity customers overall. It was clear that it would be a very difficult and expensive task to find such consumers by simple door-knocking techniques and that this may not be representative of the universe. Instead it was decided to recruit them through the Ipsos MORI omnibus (the in-home face-to-face Capibus survey) using two alternative definition questions. A key advantage of the omnibus method of recruitment is the ability to spread the sample geographically, and to conduct the screening within a nationally representative framework.

To ensure that the sample accurately represented customers with ToU Tariffs, the following definitions were set:

- Firstly, they must be responsible or jointly responsible for the mains electricity bill in their household
- Secondly, they were asked if their electricity meter was similar to those in a set of pictures of electricity meters that are used for ToU Tariffs
- Thirdly, respondents were asked if they were on any of the ToU tariffs (phrased as ‘off peak rates’) from a pre-determined list of the main types of ToU tariff currently in use

⁸ Consumer Focus commissioned TNS-RI to conduct a face to face survey of 3,931 people in October 2011

Based on our experience from other research, we assumed that some respondents would either be unable to recall the name of their tariff, or may incorrectly identify themselves as having one of these types of tariff. Therefore, two different definition questions were included to try to accurately identify ToU tariff users in the sample. The recruitment questionnaire is shown in the appendices

Fieldwork was carried out on three waves of Capibus (the Ipsos MORI omnibus) which consisted of three GB-representative samples of approximately 2,000 interviews each between 9 February and 1 March 2012. In fact 5,914 interviews were completed in total, and 4,761 of these were conducted with mains electricity customers who are at least jointly responsible for their household bills. The definitions initially produced 1,017 respondents who identified themselves as having a ToU Tariff, a penetration of 21% of electricity bill payers. This used both definition questions combined.

After the first week of omnibus fieldwork it became clear that many respondents had apparently incorrectly identified themselves as being on a ToU Tariff. The indications were that many consumers were unable to recognise photographs of multi-rate meters reliably and so too many were assuming their own meter, similar to the pictures shown, were ToU meters. However, many of these consumers then said that they were not on an off-peak tariff at the next question. Because of the doubt over the definition of those identified at the meter illustration question it was decided to take only those identified as ToU tariff customers from being on one of the list of “off peak tariffs” such as Economy 7. Throughout this report, all analysis of ToU Tariff customers is based on this definition, which amounts to 620 interviews, representing 13% of electricity customers.

Of these, 232 (37%) agreed to be re-interviewed, a proportion slightly higher than normally achieved on an omnibus survey. The method chosen for the qualitative follow-up was 15 face-to-face depth interviews. Fieldwork was conducted between 8 and 14 March, 2012. Leads were selected so that the respondents interviewed met one of the following profiles: ⁹

1. ToU tariff users who feel that the tariff is right for their household's needs and who are satisfied with it

⁹ See appendices for the detailed profiles of respondents interviewed in the qualitative stage of this project

2. ToU tariff users who have storage heating, who do not think that the tariff they are on is right for their household's needs and are dissatisfied with the tariff
3. ToU tariff users who do not have storage heating, do not think that the tariff is right for their household's needs and are dissatisfied with the tariff

The topic guide used can be found in the appendices. Verbatim comments quoted in the report are identified generically by profile group.

The main findings are given in this report. Throughout the report we have given special emphasis to the views of the key sub-group of ToU tariff users who have storage heating. They are contrasted in particular with those ToU tariff users who have gas central heating, who make up most of the proportion who do not have storage heating.

Consumer profile

Type of ToU tariff

To identify consumers with these tariffs they were shown a list, and asked if they were on an off-peak rate, either on the list shown or otherwise.¹⁰ The list of the ToU tariffs available, as of February 2012, is shown in the appendix.

Of those asked, 620 people reported having a ToU tariff. This represents an incidence of 13% of all domestic electricity bill payers. Economy 7 is, by some margin, the most widely used ToU tariff representing around two-thirds of those with a ToU tariff (66%). A further 10% are on an Economy 10 tariff. It is not possible by this method to find adequate numbers of customers on all the named tariffs, or all the tariff types to permit separate analysis of them

Table 1: Name of ToU tariff

QCF03. Can I just check, are you on one of these off peak electricity rates that have two or three different unit rates or prices – Economy 7 is a popular example? IF YES: Which?

	<i>All with a ToU tariff</i> (620) %	<i>All with storage heating</i> (155)	<i>All with gas central heating</i> (397)	<i>All bill payers</i> (4,761) %
Economy 7 (any supplier)	66	80	60	9
Economy 10 (from EDF Energy, E.ON, nPower or Southern Electric)	10	5	12	1
Eco20:20 (from EDF Energy)	3	0	4	*
Warmwise (from EDF Energy)	2	1	2	*
Heatwise (from E.ON)	2	*	3	*
Super Tariff (from nPower)	1	*	2	*
Comfort Plus (from Scottish Power)	5	6	5	1
Total Heat, Total Control (from SSE)	2	2	2	*

¹⁰ Initially, respondents could qualify if they thought they had a specific type of meter, from a series of picture showcards. However, analysis showed that many of these did not have a ToU tariff. Therefore ToU users were solely defined by their response to question CF03 – the list of tariffs. See appendices.

Superdeal/Flexiheat (from SSE)	2	*	3	*
Other off peak tariff	8	4	4	1
No, not on off peak tariff	0	0	0	78
Don't know	0	1	1	9
All consumers with a ToU tariff (n=620)	100	100	100	13

Source: Ipsos MORI

Those with storage heating are most likely of all to be on an Economy 7 tariff, whereas those with gas central heating are less likely to have Economy 7, but more likely to have Economy 10.

Type of home heating

Gas central heating is the predominant form of heating for ToU tariff users. Two in three (66%) have it installed. Furthermore, 71% of all users have mains gas in their household.

Just a quarter of ToU tariff users (24%) use electric storage heating as their main source of heating. It is possible many of these are old systems: for 72% of these consumers, storage heating was already installed in their home when they moved in. Just 21% installed storage heating after they moved in to their property and 7% had old heaters upgraded. Most consumers with storage heating do not have mains gas in their homes (84%).

Other forms of heating account for only small minorities of those with a ToU tariff, though among the qualitative case studies were several consumers with storage heating who did not use it, preferring to rely on some form of secondary heating such as convection heaters.

Table 13: Main heating method

QCF04. What is the main heating you use in your home

<i>Base: All bill payers with a TOU tariff</i>	All (620) %
Electric storage heaters	24
Gas central heating	66
Other gas heating (e.g. single point gas fire)	1
Solid fuel central heating	1

Oil central heating	3
Other electric heating (e.g. single point electric fires or convection heaters)	2
Other solid fuel heating	*
Calor gas, propane or LPG	*
District heating	*
Other (e.g. underfloor heating, heat pump etc)	2
Don't know	*

Source: Ipsos MORI

Table 14: When storage heating installed

QCF05. Were your storage heaters in your home when you moved in, were they fitted for the first time since you have been there, or did you have old ones replaced since you have been there?

<i>Base: All bill payers with a TOU tariff and storage heaters</i>	All (155) %
In home when moved in	72
Fitted for first time since moved in	21
Old ones replaced since moved in	7
Don't know	-

Source: Ipsos MORI

Table 15: Mains gas in household

Mains gas in household

<i>Base: All bill payers with a TOU tariff</i>	All (620) %	All with storage heating (155) %
Yes	71	16
No	29	84

Source: Ipsos MORI

Home tenure and housing type

There are no significant differences in the profiles by home tenure of those who are ToU tariff users and electricity bill payers overall. However, the profile of the sub-group with storage heating is notably different to those with gas central heating: those with storage heating are more likely to rent their homes, particularly from the private sector. Those with gas central

heating, on the other hand are more likely to be owner occupiers or own with a mortgage; more likely even than electricity bill payers in general.

Table 2: Home Tenure

<i>Base:</i>	All bill payers with a ToU tariff (620) %	All with storage heating (155)	All with gas central heating (397)	All bill payers (4,761) %
Owner occupied/ mortgage	69	53	76	69
Rented private	15	25	12	17
Rented council	15	22	12	14

Source: Ipsos MORI

ToU tariff users can be found in all housing types. They are most likely to live in terraced, detached or semi detached housing, rather than purpose built or converted flats, maisonettes or studios. Those with storage heating are, however, quite different in that they are more likely to live in purpose built flats or terraced houses and less likely to live in detached or semi-detached homes.

Table 3: Type of housing

CF26. Which of these best describes your type of home?

<i>Base: All bill payers with a ToU tariff</i>	All (620) %	All with storage heating (155)	All with gas central heating (397)
Terraced house	28	31	28
Semi-detached house	29	21	32
Detached house	24	10	28
Purpose built flat/maisonette/studio	13	29	7
Converted flat/maisonette/studio	3	5	2
Other	3	4	2

Source: Ipsos MORI

Social grade

There are some differences in the profile of ToU tariff users and that of bill payers in general in terms of social grade. ToU tariff users as a whole are significantly more likely to be from social grades ABC1: 61% ABC1 compared to 56% among bill payers overall. However the analysis by type of heating again shows the reason for this pattern: those with gas central heating, who dominate the ToU group, are more likely to be ABC1, while those with storage heating are comprised of more C2DEs. The net effect is to raise the social grade profile above that of bill payers in general.

Table 4: Social Grade

<i>Base:</i>	<i>All bill payers with a ToU tariff (620)</i>	<i>All with storage heating (155)</i>	<i>All with gas central heating (397)</i>	<i>All bill payers (4,761)</i>
	%	%	%	%
AB	31	20	34	28
C1	30	32	30	28
C2	21	24	21	20
DE	18	24	15	23
ABC1	61	52	64	56
C2DE	39	48	36	44

Source: Ipsos MORI

Household income and sources of income

A similar overall picture emerges on household income. While there is little difference between bill payers generally and ToU tariff users earning up to £24,999, customers with a ToU tariff are more likely to have a household income of over £25,000 per year. As in the case of social grade, this is a result of two-thirds of the ToU group being comprised of people with gas central heating, who are likely to have a higher income. ToU tariff users with storage heating, on the other hand, have much lower incomes – just 28% have a household income of £25,000 or more.

Table 5: Income profile

Household income

<i>Base:</i>	<i>All bill payers with a ToU</i>	<i>All with storage heating (155)</i>	<i>All with gas central heating</i>	<i>All bill payers (4,761)</i>
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	<i>tariff</i> (620)		(397)	
	%	%	%	%
£13,499 or lower	18	29	15	19
£13,500 - £24,999	14	12	14	15
£25,000 plus	42	28	46	35
Not stated	26	31	25	31

Comparing data on the source of income for this set of consumers with the profile of the GB population, there are only minor differences. Around three in five of each receive their earnings from employment. ToU tariff users are more likely to have a private or occupational pension as their main source of income than UK adults in general.

Among the GB population who are in employment or on private pensions, approximately one in five supplement this income with some form of state benefit (22%) though this proportion is a little lower for ToU tariff users – 16%. However, when combined with employment data, the figures show that proportion that are net recipients of benefits (receiving benefits or employment supplemented by benefits) is exactly the same for ToU tariff users and the UK public – 35%. Those with gas central heating are more likely to be in employment, while those with storage heating are more likely to be on a pension.

Table 6: Income source

QCF30a. Which of these is your main source of household income?

<i>Base:</i>	<i>All bill payers with a ToU tariff</i> (620)	<i>All with storage heating</i> (155)	<i>All with gas central heating</i> (397)	<i>All adults</i> ¹¹ (2,123)
	%	%	%	%
Earnings from employment or self-employment	62	47	69	58
Private or occupational pension	16	19	13	9
State pension	11	20	8	11
Job seekers allowance	2	1	2	4
Other state benefits	6	7	6	7
Investment income	1	1	1	1

¹¹ Based on results from face-to-face survey based on nationally representative sample of 2,123 adults across UK (weighted sample 2,000), conducted January 2012 by TNS – RI for Consumer Focus

Other income	2	3	1	3
Refused	0	0	0	6
Don't know	*	*	0	1

Source: Ipsos MORI

Table 7: Income supplementation by state benefits

Recipients of additional benefits

Base:		<i>All bill payers with a TOU tariff whose main source of income is earnings from employment or private pension</i> (453) %	<i>All adults whose main source of income is earnings from employment or private pension</i> (2000) %
1.	Yes	16	22
2.	No	84	78

Source: Ipsos MORI

Table 8: Overall benefit receipt

Net recipients of benefits

Base:		<i>All bill payers with a TOU tariff whose main source of income is benefits or earnings plus benefits</i> (223) %	<i>All adults whose main source of income is benefits or earnings plus benefits</i> %
1.	Net recipient of benefits (main source of income is benefits OR earnings plus benefits)	35	35

Source: Ipsos MORI

Age profile

There are no significant differences in the age profile of all ToU tariff users compared to all bill payers.

Differences emerge, however, on considering those with storage heating separately. They are more likely to be from the 16-34 and 65+ age groups than all on ToU tariffs and all bill

payers in general. Consumers with gas central heating are more likely to be from the 35-54 age group, and, to a lesser extent, from the 55-64 age group.

Table 9: Age

Age of respondent

<i>Base:</i>	<i>All bill payers with a TOU tariff (620)</i>	<i>All with storage heating (155)</i>	<i>All with gas central heating (397)</i>	<i>All bill payers (4,761)</i>
	%	%	%	%
16-34	20	28	19	22
35-54	40	25	46	38
55-64	17	13	18	16
65+	22	35	17	23

Source: Ipsos MORI

Regional distribution

The results of this research correlate with data received by Consumer Focus from Elexon on the geographical distribution of ToU tariff users.¹² It shows a higher concentration of ToU tariff users in the East Midlands, West Midlands, East of England and the South East. In contrast, numbers are particularly low in the North West, Wales and the North East.

Consumers with storage heating are more frequently found in the South Eastern, Eastern and South Western regions as well as in Scotland and, to a lesser extent, the North West. Gas central heating users are most notably found in the Midlands and South East, as well as London.

Table 10: Region

Regions and devolved administrations

<i>Base:</i>	<i>All bill payers with a TOU tariff (620)</i>	<i>All with storage heating (155)</i>	<i>All with gas central heating (397)</i>	<i>All bill payers (4,761)</i>
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¹² Meter data that Consumer Focus obtained from Elexon shows that the Midlands, East of England and the South East have the most ToU tariff users.

	%	%	%	%
South East	20	17	21	16
East Midlands	14	6	18	7
West Midlands	13	6	16	8
Eastern	12	14	9	8
London	12	5	16	11
Scotland	8	14	6	9
South West	7	17	3	9
Yorks & Humber	6	5	6	8
North West	5	10	4	13
Wales	2	4	1	5
North East	1	3	1	5

Source: Ipsos MORI

Payment method for electricity

Most ToU tariff users pay for electricity by Direct Debit (73%). Compared to some recent research for Ofgem, this suggests that ToU users are more likely to pay this way than electricity bill payers in general. Just over one in ten (12%) pay by cheque, cash or card on receipt of the bill (standard credit) and a further nine percent use a pre-payment meter (PPM), somewhat lower than the national proportion.

Again there are big differences by method of heating: those with storage heating are less likely to use direct debit than those with gas central heating, and more likely to pay by standard credit or PPM.

Table 11: Payment method

QCF28. How do you pay for the electricity you use?

Base:	All bill payers with a TOU tariff (620)	All with storage heating (155)	All with gas central heating (397)	All with mains electricity who are responsible for bills (1,461) ¹³
	%	%	%	%
Monthly Direct Debit	73	68	76	68
Pay by cheque, cash or card on receipt of your bill	12	16	10	13
Prepayment Meter	9	12	8	12
Fuel Direct (where a set amount is deducted from your benefits before you receive them)	*	0	0	0

¹³ Taken from research conducted on behalf of Ofgem, March 2012 – See appendices

Weekly/Fortnightly payment scheme	1	1	1	1
Payment card/book that I use whenever I choose	3	1	3	2
Other method	3	2	2	0

Source: Ipsos MORI

Lifestyle of household

Table 12: Lifestyle

QCF29. Which of these types of living and working pattern best fits your household?

Base: All bill payers with a TOU tariff

	All (620) %	All with storage heaters (155)	All with gas central heating (397) %
I am/We are at work weekdays and at home in the evenings and at weekends	38	29	41
I am/We are often at home all day during the week	47	52	45
I am/We are working shifts so I am/we are at home at irregular times	11	13	11
The home is often empty, even overnight, because I am/we are away	1	2	1
None of these	3	3	3

Source: Ipsos MORI

Almost half of ToU tariff users are at home all day (47%) and 38% pursue the typical working pattern of being at home only in the evenings and weekends. It is among those with storage heaters, however, that lifestyle patterns are likely to have most impact. Though it applies to significantly fewer storage heating users, there are still 29% who are only at home in the evenings and at weekends and so are likely to have more difficulties with their storage heating. Since by the evening storage heaters may not still be at their full output, this can be exacerbated if homes are poorly insulated so much of the heat emitted by storage heaters during the day will be lost. To these can be added the 13% who work shifts, so their time at home may not align with periods when the storage heaters are producing heat, though shifts can also be an advantage – such ToU tariff users may use most energy at night when it is cheapest.

Consumer behaviour

Running other household appliances at cheap rates

Half of all those on ToU tariffs run appliances to take advantage of cheap rates. This rises to a majority of the 35-54 age bracket and of the C1 and C2 social grades. It makes up 34% of the DE social grades. Those with storage heating are even less likely to use other appliances at cheap rates. Overall, analysis shows that 38% of all ToU tariff users do not have storage heating OR use appliances at off peak periods. This is a significant sub-group for whom the ToU tariff apparently holds no special advantages.

Table 16: Running appliances during off peak times

QCF08. In addition to heating, it is possible to run other household appliances at cheap rates, for example at night. This might include immersion heaters, washing machines and so on. Do you run other appliances at times to take advantage of cheap rates?

<i>Base: All bill payers with a TOU tariff</i>	All (620)	All with storage heating (155)	All with gas central Heating (397)
	%	%	%
Yes	50	47	49
No	50	53	51

Source: Ipsos MORI

Follow up qualitative research was conducted with respondents who fell into one of three groups:

1. ToU tariff users who feel that the tariff is right for their household's needs and who are satisfied with it
2. ToU tariff users who have storage heating, who do not think that the tariff they are on is right for their household's needs and are dissatisfied with the tariff

3. ToU tariff users who do not have storage heating, do not think that the tariff is right for their household's needs and are dissatisfied with the tariff

The qualitative research identifies some cases (in Group 1) for whom the ToU tariff works well, despite their not having storage heating. Two of these are retired men, Peter and Graham, both of whom are evangelists for the E7 tariff. Peter has a detailed understanding of how his E7 tariff works and takes advantage of it by using a timer on both his water heater and other appliances such as dishwasher and washing machine. He has been on off peak rates for 36 years so it is a way of life for him.

“If you use your electricity at night you save money on it. It used to be that you only needed to use 10% on the Off Peak rates to make it worthwhile. The fact that we are using something like 25% to 30%, if I look at the meter, about 40% is on the low rate.

Since those meters went in and they were new meters there are 40,000 units on Off Peak and there are 64,000 on peak time. So that means about 40% is on the Economy 7.”

Peter A, Group 1, 65+, South East England, Economy 7 customer

However it comes at the cost of a need for vigilance and some anxiety about the precise times when the rates change:

“I am bit concerned about the meter, I thought the timings on the clock was controlled from Droitwich through Radio 4, or the radio thing, but it obviously isn't as ours has got out of kilter. And I am not sure why ours has got out of kilter.”

Peter A, Group 1, 65+, South East Economy 7 customer

Graham, also retired, lives in a well insulated housing association home heated by a heat pump. He also uses a timer to heat water at night, and to use his dishwasher and washing machine. He brews beer, heating it at night. He even does some ironing during the off peak period and occasionally cooks a meal at night. He puts many of the advantages down to the fact that he and his wife are retired:

“I think people who are like us retired and have the right equipment installed, young families are always washing and the dishwasher is going all the time, certainly all things like that can be set up for Off Peak usage. They say our Off Peak usage is twice as much as our day usage.”

Graham, Group 1, 65+, W Midlands, Economy 7 customer

Sally, who works from home on a computer, also makes the maximum effort to “time shift” her energy usage on appliances:

“I always check when he comes to read because I’m always there when he reads them, so he will say this is the reading and we agree the readings, so they’re very good like that.”

Sally, Group 1, 35-54, South East, Economy 7 customer

She has gas central heating which is needed to keep the house warm all day for her much older retired husband. She has developed her lifestyle over 20 years with a business at home, steadily adding timers for washing machine, tumble drier and dishwasher. Her view is that she has adapted to the point where the E7 tariff really pays:

“I’m very satisfied now, though I must say at the beginning, before we could do all the things at night (previously did not have timer switches), I’m not sure it saved us money, because they always say, unless you do a certain amount at night, unless you do a certain percentage, it doesn’t pay. I think we must have just inherited it. Anyway, it does now. It’s 30% of our consumption, since we had the brand new meter.”

Sally, Group 1, 35-54, South East, Economy 7 customer

Understanding bills and reading electricity meters

Two-thirds of ToU tariff users (66%) feel they understand their metering and bills at least fairly well, but the remainder rate their understanding lower than this. There are some indications that understanding improves with age: 75% of the 55-64 age group and 73% of the 65+ feel they understand it at least fairly well, compared to just 61% of those aged up to 54. There is no significant difference by social grade, however, or by type of heating. There is no evidence that those with storage heaters, for example, have any less understanding of the metering and billing.

Table 17: Understanding of time of use tariffs

QCF10. Using the list on this screen, how well do you feel you understand your electricity metering and bills? Specifically your off peak tariff.

<i>Base: All bill payers with a TOU tariff</i>	All (620) %	All with storage heating (155) %	All with gas central heating (397) %
Very well	21	22	20
Fairly well	45	42	45

Not very well	23	23	25
Not at all well	11	13	10

Source: Ipsos MORI

The qualitative case study of Lisa is an example of the small minority of storage heating users who have poor understanding of their system. Lisa is 19, on benefits and has literacy problems. She needs to use a lot of electricity for heating around the clock because she has various exotic pets, in vivariums and fish tanks, which means she would have an unusual usage pattern whatever her tariff. The ToU tariff and storage heaters add to her difficulties, though are probably not the primary cause of them, whatever her opinion on this. She is in energy debt and feels she can't afford to use her storage heaters – the animals are heated by halogen heaters. The hot water does not work. The flat is privately rented and poorly insulated. She has poor understanding of her heating system and tariff, and does not understand her electricity bills. Her conclusion about the E7 tariff is:

“It costs you more. We were in our old flat, that’s with heating and everything else from our bills from November until the end of February, we would never have used just over £200 on the key meter.”

Lisa, Group 2, 16-34, South East, Economy 7 customer

Most ToU tariff users claim to read their own meters at least quarterly, which tallies with the high proportion who pay by direct debit. Only 16% never read them and just four percent claim they do not know how to. Those with storage heating read their meters at a similar frequency to the others, except in respect of quarterly reading on which they are much less likely to read them than those with gas central heating. It is also notable that the proportion who do not know how to read meters is eight percent among those on storage heaters.

Table 18: Frequency of meter reading

QCF11. How often do you read the electricity meter or meters yourself, either for your own records or to give the supplier the readings?

<i>Base: All bill payers with a TOU tariff</i>	All	All with storage heating	All with gas central heating
	(620) %	(155) %	(397) %
Monthly or more often	24	26	25
Quarterly (approx every three months)	35	27	37
Just occasionally	21	21	21
Never (but know how to)	16	17	15

Would not know how to read them	4	8	2
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Source: Ipsos MORI

The more organised of our qualitative case study respondents not only read meters themselves but also supervise readings taken by the supplier:

I always check when he comes to read because I'm always there when he reads them, so he will say this is the reading and we agree the readings, so they're very good like that."

Graham, Group 1, 65+, W Midlands, Economy 7 customer

Seeking help and advice

Around half of those on ToU tariffs have tried in the past to get help or advice on the subject of their metering, billing or heating system. The electricity supplier has been the main source for this information, followed by family and friends and websites, such as Money Saving Expert. Just one percent have approached Consumer Direct (or energywatch before 2008). There is no significant difference between those with storage heating and those with gas central heating, implying that storage heating is probably not the problem. It is more likely to be other aspects of the TOU tariff, though we have no comparison to the frequency of seeking help and advice among all electricity bill payers.

The sub-groups least likely to have sought any advice are the 65+ age group, the DE social grades and those on Economy 7 tariffs. By comparison with other ToU tariffs, Economy 7 has generated fewest queries – just 28% of users have approached their supplier for advice, whereas for Economy 10 it is 58% and for some less popular tariffs it is indicated to be even higher (but sample sizes are too small to reliably quote figures).

Table 19: Advice of metering/billing or using heating systems

QCF12. From whom, if anyone, have you ever tried to get help or advice on the subject of your electricity metering and billing, or the best way to use your heating system?

Base: All bill payers with a TOU tariff

	All	All with storage heating	All with gas central heating
	(620)	(155)	(397)

	%	%	%
Electricity supplier	35	36	36
Family or friends	8	9	6
Website, such as Money Saving Expert	6	6	6
Citizen's Advice Bureau or other local charity	4	4	4
Local council	2	2	2
Energy Saving Trust	2	2	2
Landlord or Housing Association	2	5	*
Consumer Direct/Energywatch	1	1	1
Ofgem (the regulator)	1	1	1
Other	3	1	3
None, never tried	51	49	51

Source: Ipsos MORI

Availability of options to improve energy efficiency

Among all ToU tariff users the primary options believed to be available to them for reducing their energy bills while keeping their home warm are to fit double glazing, to use appliances less, to turn down the heating, insulate the loft or fit cavity wall insulation. One in five (20%) mentions trying to use appliances more during cheaper periods.

Those with storage heaters are less likely than those with gas central heating to mention most measures, but the difference is greatest regarding the behavioural change options. While 36% of those with gas central heating mention switching off appliances as a possible strategy, this is mentioned by just 22% of those with storage heaters. Similarly turning the heating down is an option for only 15% of storage heating users, but 31% of gas central heating users. Storage heating users are also less likely to mention using appliances more at cheap periods, and less likely to suggest changing their electricity to a different rate (tariff), but they are more likely to suggest changing their heating system as a strategy. Storage heating users are most likely to claim there are no measures available to them – 29% compared to just 18% of gas central heating users.

Many of the behavioural and attitudinal differences noted of storage heating users may result from the different profile of this sub-group of ToU tariff users. Compared to users of gas central heating, they are more likely to be of lower social grade, lower income, privately renting accommodation and from the oldest or youngest age groups. These demographic differences may have an effect on their environmental opinions and actions.

Table 20: Energy efficiency options available

QCF14. Which of these options, if any, do you believe are available to you to make your home more energy efficient, that is, to spend less money on energy while keeping the home just as warm? What could you do?

<i>Base: All bill payers with a TOU tariff</i>	All (620) %	All with storage heating (155) %	All with gas central heating (397) %
Fit double glazing	38	32	42
Switch off appliances/use them less	32	22	36
Turn the heating down/don't use heating so much	27	15	31
Insulate the loft (for the first time)	26	22	28
Fit cavity wall insulation	25	21	27
Add more insulation to the loft	24	17	27
Switch to cheaper energy supplier	24	21	25
Try to use appliances more during the times of cheaper rates	20	14	22
Change my heating system	20	25	18
Buy more efficient appliance/ones that use less energy	19	11	21
Take other measures to make home more energy efficient eg electricity generation, like solar panels	15	8	17
Switch to different electricity rate	12	9	13
Fit other insulation	11	7	13
Exchange my meter for a standard meter	8	6	8
Nothing. No options available to me	20	29	18
Don't know	3	5	3

Source: Ipsos MORI

Energy efficiency measures taken

The energy efficiency measures ToU tariff users have taken themselves since moving in to their current home are led by fitting double glazing, insulating the loft, switching suppliers and turning the heating down. They are a mixture of behavioural and structural changes. Overall, 59% have made structural improvements to their current homes while 55% have changed

their behaviour in some way. Those with storage heating are slightly less likely to have made structural changes to their homes, but a lot less likely than others to have made some behavioural change. In particular they are less likely to have turned down the heating or used it less, less likely to have changed their heating system and less likely to have switched supplier. Again, this is probably linked to the demographic profile of storage heating users.

Table 21: Energy efficiency measures taken since moving in

QCF15. Which of these options, if any, has been done in your home?

<i>Base: All bill payers with a TOU tariff</i>	All (620) %	All with storage heating (155) %	All with gas central heating (397) %
Fitted double glazing	42	40	40
Insulated the loft (for the first time)	27	27	27
Switched to cheaper energy supplier	27	18	28
Turned the heating down/don't use heating so much	27	19	29
Added insulation to the loft	25	22	25
Switched off appliances/use them less	25	23	24
Fitted cavity wall insulation	20	14	21
Tried to use appliances more during the times of cheaper rates	20	14	20
Bought more efficient appliance/one that uses less energy	20	12	21
Changed my heating system	17	10	18
Switched to different tariff	15	8	16
Fitted other insulation	10	9	8
Exchanged my meter for a standard meter	5	5	5
Taken other measures to make home more energy efficient eg electricity generation, like solar panels	4	2	4
None of these	26	34	25
Don't know	1	1	1
Any structural improvements made	59	53	59
Any behavioural change by respondents	55	45	56

Source: Ipsos MORI

The structural improvements most likely to have been made before ToU tariff users moved in are similarly double glazing, loft insulation and cavity wall insulation. Overall, 52% had any structural improvements made previously. Users of storage heating are little different, except that they are slightly more likely to have cavity wall insulation, which may be due to a slightly higher proportion of local authority housing types.

Table 22: Energy efficiency measures taken before moving in

QCF15. Which of these options, if any, has been done in your home? – Previously, before moving in

<i>Base: All bill payers with a TOU tariff</i>	All (620) %	All with storage heating (155) %	All with gas central heating (397) %
Fitted double glazing	35	36	36
Insulated the loft (for the first time)	29	28	28
Fitted cavity wall insulation	16	20	14
Added insulation to the loft	9	7	9
Changed my heating system	4	5	4
Fitted other insulation	4	3	4
Exchanged my meter for a standard meter	4	4	3
Taken other measures to make home more energy efficient eg electricity generation, like solar panels	1	1	*
None of these	42	45	40
Don't know	3	2	3
Any structural improvements made	52	50	53

Source: Ipsos MORI

Switching supplier

Just over half of those on ToU tariffs have ever tried to switch electricity supplier. This is higher than we found on the recent Ofgem Customer Engagement survey 2012¹⁴ for all electricity customers, where just 35% claimed to have ever switched supplier. The proportion attempting to switch is, however, much lower for those with storage heating (37%) than those with gas central heating (57%).

Switching is related to age and social grade: the highest rate of switching is among the 35-54 age group (58%) and the ABC1 social grades (58%).

While the overall rate of success in completing a switch is 90% among all ToU tariff users, among storage heating users it is just 82%.

Table 23: Switching supplier

QCF19. Have you ever tried to switch your electricity supplier since you have lived here?

<i>Base: All bill payers with a TOU tariff</i>	All (620) %	All with storage heating (155) %	All with gas central heating (397) %
Yes	51	37	57
No	49	63	43

Source: Ipsos MORI

In the qualitative case studies, there was widespread cynicism about switching supplier. John, a satisfied Economy 7 user who has switched supplier, voiced his irritation with the competitive market:

I'm just not satisfied with the flipping too many companies all arguing the toss about who's the best because that seems to me to be utterly ridiculous.

John, Group 1, 65+, E Midlands, Economy 7 customer

Clive, who claims he has not switched, has a similar view:

¹⁴ See appendices for reference to Ofgem report

I find that because all the different suppliers now, that's the problem, they all say they're the cheapest and at the end of the day they're all much the same. I think personally it was a bad idea from the government to allow loads of different companies because our electricity supply and everything now is not owned by any British companies."

Clive, Group 2, 55-64, Eastern England, Economy 7 customer

Table 24: Success with switching supplier

QCF20. Did you succeed in switching to another supplier?

<i>Base: All bill payers with a TOU tariff who have tried to switch supplier</i>	All (306)	All with storage heating (54)	All with gas central heating (221)
	%	%	%
Yes	90	82	91
No	10	18	9

Source: Ipsos MORI

For those who have switched, the principal methods of making the switch are by phoning the supplier and through a salesman. Price comparison websites are in third place. This is somewhat different to the pattern for all electricity switchers, as measured by Ofgem, which shows salesmen as less important among all electricity switchers (23%), and price comparison websites a little more important (25%).

ToU tariff users with storage heating are indicated as more likely to switch on the phone and less likely to use salesmen, though the sub-sample of switchers is just 44 and therefore the 12-point difference from those with gas central heating is not statistically significant.

Table 25: Method of switching supplier

QCF21. How did you make the switch?

<i>Base: All bill payers with a TOU tariff who have tried to switch supplier and succeeded:</i>	All (274)	All with storage heating (44)	All with gas central heating (200)
	%	%	%
On the phone	30	42	30
Through a salesman	28	23	29
Through a price comparison website	21	19	20
On the supplier's own website	13	11	13
Some other way	3	2	3

The added complexity of comparing a ToU tariff with other suppliers is the key factor which made John dependent on an online/telephone switching service (energyhelpline) to be able to make a decision whom to switch to:

“Yes I look at the details and try and figure it out but nine times out of ten I have difficulty sorting it out, because they’ve got so many strange, I mean this thing why I’ve just changed, I’ve changed to some company I’ve never heard of before. The energyhelpline guy insisted, he said it will be cheaper because nPower’s standing charges and what they charge for all the other power more than outweighs, you know the benefit you’re getting off cheaper Economy 7. Well I’m not sure. I suppose we do use a fair bit of power on standard”

John, Group 1, 65+, E Midlands, Economy 7 customer

Most ToU tariff users (77%) who switched feel they have saved money though switching, though those with storage heating are a little less certain than those with gas central heating, and over a quarter of those with storage heating (26%) believe they did not save money after switching (compared to 18% of all ToU tariff users). The figures for ToU tariff users compare well with those for all electricity customers who switched to save money in the Ofgem survey – 73% believed they were afterwards paying less.

Table 26: Effect of switching supplier

QCF22. Did switching supplier make your electricity bills cheaper?

Base: All bill payers with a TOU tariff who have tried to switch supplier and succeeded:	All (274)	All with storage heating (44)	All with gas central heating (200)
	%	%	%
Yes	77	69	78
No	18	26	17
Don't know	6	5	5

Source: Ipsos MORI

Table 27: Difficulties with switching supplier

QCF23. Did you experience any difficulties in the switching process? IF YES: Were they related to the off peak rate you are on?

<i>Base: All bill payers with a TOU tariff who have tried to switch supplier and succeeded:</i>	All (306)	All with storage heating (54)	All with gas central heating (221)
	%	%	%
Yes, difficulties experienced, related to off peak rate	8	12	7
Yes, difficulties experienced, but NOT due to off peak rate	22	21	24
No, no difficulties	71	68	69

Source: Ipsos MORI

About three in ten ToU tariff users experienced some kind of difficulty on switching, though most of these difficulties were described as not connected to the tariff itself. Those with storage heating are a little more likely to have met difficulties and those difficulties are more likely to have been with the tariff itself. However, the figures remain relatively low and the sub-sample size of attempted switchers with storage heating is quite small so the figures are only indicative.

ToU tariff users who are prevented from switching are extremely rare. One case study was with Wendy, a dissatisfied council tenant in Scotland, who does not use her storage heating because she believed it was either faulty or inefficient. She is on a Preserved Tariff (Comfort Plus Control from ScottishPower). She is unsure, but knows only that E.ON¹⁵ rejected her when she tried to switch:

“It was just E.ON. I haven’t checked with any others because I don’t know if I just thought because they wouldn’t take my two meters I thought obviously the rest are going to be the same. Plus the fact that I don’t really want to change until we get this all sorted to be honest with you.”

Wendy, Group 2, 35-54, Scotland, Comfort Plus Control (protected)

¹⁵ This is probably because often other suppliers cannot support certain preserved tariffs such as Comfort plus Control

Satisfaction

Satisfaction with heating system

Broadly, ToU tariff users are satisfied with their home’s heating system, though the comparison of those with storage heating and those with gas central heating exposes the most important division. Just 68% of those with storage heating are satisfied with it compared to 91% of those with gas central heating. Most dissatisfaction with heating systems occurs among the 16-34 age group the DE social grades and those who rent their homes, both from the council/housing associations and from private landlords.

The propensity of a consumer to be satisfied or dissatisfied with storage heating is related to whether it was in the property when the consumer moved in or if the consumer had it fitted. Among those with pre-existing storage heating just 62% are satisfied with it and 31% dissatisfied, but among those who had it fitted themselves satisfaction is 84% and dissatisfaction just 11%.

Table 28: Satisfaction with heating system

QCF06. Using this list, how satisfied are you with your home’s heating system?

Base: All bill payers with a TOU tariff:

	All (620)	All with storage heating (155)	All with gas central heating (397)	All whose storage heating was fitted previously (111)	All who fitted storage heating since moving in (44)
	%	%	%	%	%
Completely satisfied	19	16	21	13	23
Very satisfied	39	28	43	28	29
Fairly satisfied	26	24	27	21	32
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	5	7	4	7	5
Fairly dissatisfied	6	10	4	12	7
Very dissatisfied	3	7	1	8	5
Completely dissatisfied	3	8	1	11	0
Satisfied	84	68	91	62	84
Dissatisfied	11	25	6	31	11

The case studies suggest some ToU users with storage heating do not use it at all. Three of the four respondents in Group 2 (have storage heating and are dissatisfied with it) do not actually use it. Wendy has metering issues (incorrect readings taken), Lisa has serious debt issues and Jessica also has metering issues leading to a dispute over very high bills:

“We had issues with the meters being set wrong we were told we weren’t meeting the required amount, which was a shock to us. We were told they were forcing us to have a pre-payment meter, which we then argued the point with and then the chap came out and I just told him to get on with it in the end, but five minutes later he knocked on the door and said, “I can’t do anything your meter’s packed up and that’s why there’s so many problems”. We’re still having issues as to whether the bills are correct or not because they are extortionately high.”

Jessica, Group 2, 16-34, W Midlands, Economy 7 customer

Just one of the four dissatisfied customers interviewed is still using his storage heating, Clive, and he only uses it when he has to:

“At the moment while I’m between contracts and I’m at home it helps a bit but we tend to only put the storage heaters on when it’s extreme cold, and continually looking so on the weather forecast. Most times you put on another thick jumper.”

Clive, Group 2, 55-64, Eastern England, Economy 7 customer

He has a suspicion his old storage heaters are not working properly and is not entirely sure of the times when rates are cheaper.

Those cases broadly satisfied with their storage heating are, like those satisfied with their ToU tariff more generally, often consumers who have good understanding of the system and time to monitor it properly, as well as a lifestyle that fits with it. Their homes are often well insulated:

“I think ours are actually pretty low compared to most people I talk to. The house is quite new and it is really well insulated so we find we don’t have to use the heating very much and I think that is probably our biggest drain on the power is the heating.”

Robert, Group 1, 35-54, W Midlands, Economy 7 customer

Lawson, in Scotland, a retired man on a dynamic teleswitching tariff, is very satisfied with the way his storage heating works in concert with the tariff:

“The meter changes automatically, the storage switches on and off at given times. It is usually on for about half an hour about 10.00 or 11.00 o’clock, then it goes off and then there is a break and it comes on again and it is on for the whole night then until about 7.00am”

Lawson, Group 1, 65+, Scotland, Dynamic Teleswitching tariff

The system suits his lifestyle perfectly, and there is just enough control for the customer to be able to turn off the heating or turn it down when necessary. Having been on the tariff for 20 years it is well understood.

While 89% of those with gas central heating believe it is right for their needs, among those with storage heating it falls to just 59%. Over a third (37%) of storage heating users believe it is the not right kind of heating for them. The sample sizes for other heating methods are too small to report on reliably.

Table 29: Heating system appropriate for household
QCF16. Do you believe your main heating, that is <INSERT ANSWER TO CF04>, is the right one for your household’s needs?

<i>Base:</i>		Yes	No	Don't Know
MAIN HEATING TYPE	<i>(All bill payers with a TOU tariff and <heating mode></i>			
Electric storage heaters	(155) %	59	37	4
Gas central heating	(397) %	89	9	3
Other gas heating (e.g. single point gas fire)	(7) %	86	14	0
Solid fuel central heating	(5)%	77	23	0
Oil central heating	(20) %	75	25	0
Other electric heating (e.g. single point electric fires or convection heaters)	(17) %	71	20	9
Other solid fuel heating	(3) %	39	61	0
Calor gas, propane, LPG	(2) %	0	100	0
District heating	(4) %	100	0	0
Other (e.g. underfloor heating, heat pump, etc)	(9) %	96	0	4

Source: Ipsos MORI

The omnibus survey did not ask whether consumers actually use their storage heating, if they have it. The case studies noted poor opinions of the efficacy of storage heaters, whether or not it is the right type of heating for the consumer – typical of these was Jessica:

“I would say it’s not as efficient as gas central heating. It’s nowhere near as efficient”

Jessica, Group 2, 16-34, W Midlands, Economy 7 customer

Satisfaction with running appliances at cheap rates

Among those on ToU tariffs who run appliances at off peak times to take advantage of cheaper rates the vast majority (90%) are satisfied with the convenience of this. This satisfaction hardly varies at all by heating system used. Most satisfied of all are the 65+ age group, among whom 96% are satisfied.

Table 30: Satisfaction with the convenience of running appliances at cheap rates
QCF09. How satisfied are you with the convenience of running appliances at cheap rates?

<i>Base: All bill payers with a TOU tariff and run appliances at cheap rates:</i>	All (305)	All with storage heating (72)	All with gas central heating (191)
	%	%	%
Completely satisfied	17	23	15
Very satisfied	37	33	38
Fairly satisfied	36	34	37
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	7	7	7
Fairly dissatisfied	3	4	2
Very dissatisfied	1	0	1
Completely dissatisfied	*	0	1
Satisfied	90	89	89
Dissatisfied	4	4	4

Source: Ipsos MORI

On the other hand, several consumers in the case studies are unwilling to make special efforts to use appliances at off peak times. Apart from inconvenience there are real concerns about operating noisy appliances at night, particularly from those who live in flats:

“When you’re in a block of flats you don’t really want your washing machine on at 2.00am or 3.00am or up to 7.00am in case you wake your neighbours up.”

Wendy, Group 2, 35-54, Scotland, Comfort Plus Control (protected)

It is not a straightforward task to have appliances working through the night – a timer is usually required and it has to be properly set and maintained. For some consumers’ less ordered or demanding lifestyles this may be a requirement too far, for example Lisa with her exotic animal vivariums, or Gary, an unemployed man who fails to engage with the E7 tariff at all:

“I know very little about it, to be honest, I wasn’t even aware I had it. But I believe it starts at midnight, I don’t know when it finishes but I assume around 6.00am. But I have very little use of it. I don’t have any storage heaters, for example, so there is not anything on during the night. Even looking at this bill, I only get 10% usage at night, the rest of the usage is during the day”

Gary, Group 3, 35-54, Scotland, Economy 7 customer

Some believe that without storage heating the E7 tariff is not cost effective whatever you do, and this underlies some of the dissatisfaction with the ToU tariff in group 3, for example Jo, who has been on E7 for just 9 months:

“The big problem with the Off Peak rate is that unless you’ve got storage heaters I’m not convinced that it’s actually worth anyone having it. And what really annoys me is that I only found out recently when I talked to EDF is that when you have two meters a day and a night one they actually charge you more on the day rate than they would if you didn’t have the night one. And I think that’s a real swindle, I was gobsmacked when I found that out, so I think it’s a bit of a con personally, my feeling about it.”

Jo, Group 3, 35-54, South East, Economy 7 customer

Satisfaction with time of use tariff

Most consumers on a ToU tariff are satisfied with it overall (70%), though much of this satisfaction is a little lukewarm– 30% are “fairly” satisfied for example. Just 12% are dissatisfied. Those with storage heating are among the most dissatisfied of all: just 64% are satisfied while 20% are dissatisfied. This contrasts with just 9% dissatisfaction among those with gas central heating.

While the 16-34 age group are somewhat less satisfied than older ToU tariff users (59% satisfied) there is little difference between other age groups. There are no consistent differences across social grade, except that the C2 grade is most satisfied.

Table 31: Satisfaction with having different electricity rates at different times

QCF07. Leaving aside the increases in electricity prices that have affected everyone over the last year or so, how satisfied are you with having different electricity rates at different times, some of them off-peak?

<i>Base: All bill payers with a TOU tariff:</i>	All (620)	All with storage heating (155)	All with gas central heating (397)
	%	%	%
Completely satisfied	10	12	9
Very satisfied	30	31	30
Fairly satisfied	30	21	34
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	17	16	17
Fairly dissatisfied	7	12	5
Very dissatisfied	4	5	4
Completely dissatisfied	1	2	*
Satisfied	70	64	73
Dissatisfied	12	20	9

Source: Ipsos MORI

While most ToU tariff users (65%) consider that their tariff is the right one for their household's needs, a significant minority of 24% do not. This proportion is the same among those who have storage heating, but among those with gas central heating fewer believe that they are on the right tariff.

Those consumers who believe they are not on the right tariff are marginally more likely to be from social grades DE, aged 16-34 and in private rented accommodation.

Table 32: Tariff right for household's needs?

QCF13. Do you believe your electricity metering and billing, the off peak tariff you are on, is the right one for your household's needs?

<i>Base: All bill payers with a TOU tariff:</i>	All (620)	All with storage heating (155)	All with gas central heating (397)
---	---------------------	--	--

	%	%	%
Yes	65	70	62
No	24	24	25
Don't Know	11	6	13

Source: Ipsos MORI

In general terms, consumers need to have storage heating or to use appliances deliberately during off peak periods to make a ToU tariff financially viable. In theory, that means 62% of those with ToU tariffs have the opportunity to make them viable, though it is clear from the qualitative research that even some with storage heating are unable to do so because of personal lifestyle factors, debt, lack of competence, faulty or old heaters or just ignorance. This leaves 38% who do not have storage heating and do not use appliances at cheap rate periods. These have no reason to be on ToU tariffs and are often on them for historical reasons or because they inherited them.

Defining this sub-group as “not suitable for ToU” allows us to explore their specific experience of the tariff:

Table 33: Suitability of Time of Use Tariff

Suitability of Time of Use Tariff

	Suitable for ToU tariff*	
	Yes (388) %	No (232) %
<i>Base: All on ToU tariff (620)</i>		
Satisfaction with ToU tariff?		
Satisfied	74	63
Dissatisfied	12	13
ToU tariff right one for household needs?		
Yes	73	52
No	17	35
Don't know	10	13

Source: Ipsos MORI

* Suitable is defined as “has storage heating OR uses appliances at off peak times”

While those for whom the ToU tariff is not apparently suitable much less likely to think it is right for their needs, their level of satisfaction is not greatly lower. It seems that perceptions of the detriment caused by the ToU tariff are not widespread. This may be partly because

consumers in this position often have many other financial problems and their electricity tariff is not of high salience to them.

Typical of the “not suitable” group is case study Susie. She is on an E7 tariff but has gas central heating which also heats the water, and never uses any appliances overnight. Her house has an E7 tariff because it previously had storage heaters. She has taken many energy efficiency measures such as double glazing, CFL light bulbs and getting rid of the kettle and yet has not addressed the tariff issue. In fact she does not perceive a problem:

“I think our bill isn’t that bad, to be perfectly honest, compared to some of our friends and neighbours and things but I think we are also very energy conscious and being a Scot I am quite frugal”

Susie, Group 3, 35-54, Eastern England, Economy 7 customer

Suffering more obvious detriment is Peter B, a 60-year old man who has a long term disability. He lives in a very poorly insulated housing association house which has oil central heating that he never uses. While he is able to heat water using off peak electricity (with a timer) this is the only advantage to him of the Economy 7 tariff. He has made efforts to take further advantage of it but these have involved extreme behaviour:

“It’s the stupid times you’ve got to use it isn’t it, 12 to flaming 8.00am. I can’t keep staying up all night long cooking, but I’m old school, I want my boys to have Sunday dinners. Unless you stay up all night using it, I did, it’s good but I stopped now, I stopped it about a year ago, I stopped staying up ‘til three or four o’clock in the morning because it’s crazy when I’m trying to cook Sunday dinner, so I don’t use it now, so, I mean it’s good if it was at the right times.”

Peter B, Group 3, 55-64, Eastern England, Economy7 customer

Peter’s problems are further compounded by using a prepayment meter and being over £250 in debt to his energy supplier and so unable to switch. Although he agrees he may be on the wrong tariff, he attributes his high expenditure on energy as much to the payment method as to the tariff. He mentions a frequent dilemma of PPM users:

“I don’t know because once I’ve paid that bill then I’m going to switch and go back to a meter but then I’m thinking this is more controllable. I can use what I want rather than wait for a bill to come in. I think, Christ, I can’t afford that, so it’s a Catch 22.”

Peter B, Group 3, 55-64, Eastern England, Economy 7 customer

Issues with metering and billing

Overall, 44% of ToU tariff users have experienced at least one of the problems or issues listed. The most frequently mentioned is being on the wrong tariff or meter, though this form of questioning probably underestimates the proportion this affects – the direct question (CF13) suggests 24% are on the wrong tariff and may be a better measure of this. However among those who believe they are on the wrong tariff for their needs this question helps to identify the contributory issues, notably not knowing what time of day the cheaper tariffs start, comparatively high bills compared to acquaintances, inability to switch because of being unable to compare tariffs and errors on bills and objections to the practicality of running appliances at night, for example. These are relatively low level issues for all ToU tariff users, but are likely to be important in helping to explain why some feel they are on the wrong tariff.

Table 34: Problematic aspects of metering and billing

QCF17. Which, if any, of these aspects of your electricity metering and billing have you found to be a problem in your current home?

<i>Base: All bill payers with a TOU tariff:</i>		All whose meter/billing is right for household's needs	All whose meter/billing is NOT right for household's needs	Severity of problem: considerable upset and discomfort – and/or ill health or financial problems
	All (620)	(402)	(149)	
	%	%	%	
I'm on the wrong tariff/rate, or the wrong kind of meter	13	7	32	% 40 (75)
I don't know what time of day the cheaper rate electricity period is	12	7	23	% 20 (76)
The electricity company has recently made mistakes on my meter readings or bills	8	7	12	% 34 (57)
My bills are higher than I would expect compared to my neighbours, friends or relatives	7	4	13	% 48 (47)
I would like to switch electricity supplier but I am not allowed to	3	2	7	% 39 (17)
I would like to switch electricity supplier but I don't understand how to compare suppliers properly	6	4	12	% 47 (32)
I would like to stop having an off peak rate and pay for electricity at one rate	4	1	8	% 32 (24)
It is not practical for me to run appliances like washing machines and tumble dryers at night, so I don't make best use of the off peak electricity	8	7	10	% 21 (58)
None of these	56	70	22	% 0

The stated impact of each issue varies greatly. Causing the most severe impact are the issues of finding bills higher than those of acquaintances, not being able to compare suppliers properly and being on the wrong meter or tariff. By contrast, not knowing when the cheaper rate starts is of low impact, as is it not being practical for them to run appliances at off peak periods. In fact, in summary, few ToU tariff users who have experienced any of these problems have suffered the more serious levels of impact – just 28% have been caused considerable upset or discomfort, ill health or financial problems, this represents 12% of all ToU consumers (15% of those with storage heating).

Table 35: Impact of problems
QCF18. Which statement on this screen best describes the impact of the problems you have experienced on you or your household?

<i>Base: All bill payers with a TOU tariff and experiencing problems with metering of billing (272)</i>		%
A.	It doesn't worry me at all	26
B.	It is an irritation, but nothing serious	46
C.	It causes considerable upset or discomfort	23
D.	It is causing us upset or discomfort, but also ill health or financial problems	5

Source: Ipsos MORI

There are examples of some of these issues among our case studies. For example, a number of consumers interviewed are unsure about the exact times of the peak and off peak rates. Others feel sure about it but are probably mistaken, for example, when hours are quoted that total more than seven off-peak hours:

“I’m not quite sure what the Economy 7 comes in at, I presume it says Economy 7 I’m just assuming that it is actually 7.00pm at night to 7.00am in the morning.”

Clive, Group 2, 55-64, Eastern England, Economy 7 customer

Errors on bills, in meter readings or in actual meters are also a common occurrence among those dissatisfied with their tariff:

“We’ve just found out that they’re (meters are) round the wrong way. On the bill there’s the heating system and there’s the domestic, and they’ve been billed the wrong way round.”

Wendy, Group 2, 35-54, Scotland, Comfort Plus Control (protected)

Generic problems like billing or meter reading errors can be difficult to attribute to the ToU tariff, though the complexity of meter types and designs these consumers have are apparent from our case study interviews. We do not have a direct comparison of the rate of such errors with the total consumer base so we cannot confirm whether they are more prevalent among ToU tariff users.

Jo is a case study example of a consumer who has had her storage heating replaced (by underfloor heating) but not had her tariff changed. She is in Group 3: dissatisfied with her tariff and would like to change it, though ideally would like to experiment first to see what is cheaper:

“I did have storage heaters until very recently when I moved into the house I had two storage heaters which were OK but they took up a huge amount of space in a small house. So the underfloor heating I found to be really good and because I’m a terraced house I actually benefit from the heating next door, particularly my neighbours which have a wood burner which heats my house very nicely.

I think for the time being it works having the hot water on the Off Peak and what I want to really find out more about is what the impact would be if I didn’t have the hot water on the Off Peak. Because if I had nothing on the Off Peak then my day rate would come down and because I use most of my electricity in what they would regard as the peak times, I’m wondering whether that would offset anything that I might lose by not having the night meter”

Jo, Group 3, 35-54, South East, Economy 7 customer

Information needs

The majority of ToU tariff users claim that at least one type of information would make a difference to them in helping them to save money. Most popular is information on when it is cheaper for them to use electricity. The figure of 23% mentioning this implies it may be greater problem than estimated from the earlier question (CF17) when it was mentioned by 12%. Similarly, the proportion of 21% who would like information on how to compare prices between suppliers implies this is a bigger issue than mentioned earlier as one of the “problems” – by 6% of ToU tariff users. Other types of information, however, are of only minimal appeal: information on understanding the bill and reading meters, how to switch supplier and, least popular of all, how to use storage heaters and other off peak appliances.

Consumers with storage heaters have, overall, slightly fewer information needs than those with gas central heating, the main difference being on information on how to compare suppliers – those with storage heaters are less interested in switching supplier. Notably only 4% of consumers with storage heating are interested in information on how to use storage heaters and other appliances.

Table 36: Information needs

QCF24. Which, if any, of these kinds of information would really make a difference to you in helping you save money?

<i>Base: All bill payers with a TOU tariff:</i>	All (620)	All with storage heating (155)	All with gas central heating (397)
	%	%	%
Information on when it is cheaper to use electricity	23	22	24
Information on how to compare prices between suppliers	21	17	23
Information on understanding your electricity bill and reading your meters	6	4	7
Information on how to switch supplier	6	6	7
Information on how to use storage heaters and other appliances you use at off peak times	2	4	1
None of these	41	47	38

Consumers interviewed for the case studies who are satisfied with their ToU tariff have no requirements for more information; in general they understand the tariff very well and are not interested in switching supplier. Those with storage heaters who are dissatisfied have a variety of issues and a few would favour more help with getting the best out of their tariff and heating system:

“(Would like information about) the storage heating but other things I think, you know with your washing machines and things they’re pretty self-explanatory, but storage heating I think should have better information about using them and setting them and what not.”

Jessica, Group 2, 16-34, West Midlands, Economy 7 customer

But others can only think of general information, not necessarily related to the tariff or heating:

“Yes. I think the electricity suppliers, be it not just this one, but one that can actually give you an assessment of your usage and how they feel that you could benefit.”

Clive, Group 2, 55-64, Eastern England, Economy 7 customer

Some of those who are dissatisfied but do not have storage heating would like help with understanding the tariff and using it most effectively:

“I think they need to be clearer and I think the electricity companies and I think all, any utility company, basically, are quite happy to send you complicated bills because they are hoping you are not going to be able to work it out that well, to be perfectly honest. I think they quite like bamboozling people with a lot of numbers. But no, I think I would like a clearer tariff and some clearer direction on using the Off Peak rate.”

Susie, Group 3, 35-54, Eastern England , Economy 7 customer

“I’d be very happy to continue using the Off Peak for my hot water if someone could categorically tell me that that’s the most economical way of me using electricity. I think what would be really helpful were if there were more ways of using it. I do struggle to think apart from storage heaters and hot water, what else you could use it for frankly. Perhaps the washing machine but if you live somewhere where the noise would disturb you... And storage heaters I know they’ve come on a bit but they still essentially have the problem.”

Jo, Group 3, 35-54, South East, Economy 7 customer

An example of the value of better information is case study Gillian. This 59 year old woman was classified in the omnibus survey as saying her Economy 7 tariff was not right for her, and she is therefore included in Group 3. However when pressed, it is clear she is now making the best of it by altering her behaviour (running her dishwasher, tumble drier and washing machine at night) ever since receiving advice from British Gas:

“I think I wasn’t taking advantage of it at one point and then I had an astronomical electric bill and I think it was British Gas who suggested you know, as you’ve got Economy 7 use it and so I do. I’m using it much more now than I ever did”

Gillian, Group 3, 55-64, London, Economy 7 customer

Appendices

Types of ToU Tariffs

There are three main types of ToU Tariff:

Economy 7: Consumers are charged less for electricity at night. This tariff is particularly suitable for consumers who have storage heating or who use a lot of electricity at night.

Economy 10: This tariff provides 10 hours of cheaper-rate electricity in three time periods over 24 hours. This is suitable for consumers without storage heating.

preserved tariffs: These tariffs have been offered to consumers by their former suppliers, before the introduction of supplier competition in their locale. These tariffs work with certain types of meters or heating systems. Included in this category are consumers that have a system called Dynamic Teleswitching (DTS). As with the other tariffs, this system offers cheap electricity for heating and water heating. Electricity distribution companies remotely control the electricity meters to switch between the different rates. These consumers often have difficulty switching suppliers due to the legacy of the monopoly supply. This is either because other suppliers are unwilling or unable to take on these systems.

Statistical Significance

The overall sample size determines the accuracy of survey findings, both at an aggregate level and among sub-samples. In terms of sub-group analysis, we generally recommend a minimum sub-sample size of around 100 interviews to ensure statistically reliable results (to within ± 10 percentage points at the 95% confidence level).

The statistical reliability of analysing different sample sizes can be demonstrated by considering the following table (which excludes any design factors):

Statistical reliability at the '95% confidence interval':

Approximate sampling tolerances

applicable to percentages at or near these levels

Sample size	10% or 90%	50%
	+/- %	+/-%
1,250	2	3
500	3	4
100	6	10

While the overall result of a variable that applies to 50% of respondents is accurate to within +/- 3% for an overall sample of 1,250, analysing the same variable amongst a subset of, say 100 respondents, reduces the precision to only within +/- 10%. To test if the difference between sub-groups within the sample - or over a period of time - is a real one i.e. if it is 'statistically significant' - the differences between the two sub-sample results must be greater than the values given in the table below, again assuming a 95% confidence level.

Difference required for significance at or near these levels		
Sample sizes	10% or 90%	50%
	+/- %	+/-%
1,250 vs. 1,250	2	4
500 vs. 500	4	6
100 vs. 100	8	14

Social grade definitions

- A Professionals such as doctors, surgeons or dentists; chartered people like architects; fully qualified people with a large degree of responsibility such as senior editors, senior civil servants, town clerks, senior business executives and managers, and high ranking grades of the Services.
- B People with very responsible jobs such as university lecturers, matrons of hospitals, heads of local government departments; middle management in business; qualified scientists, bank managers, and upper grades of the Services, police inspectors.
- C1 All others doing non-manual jobs: nurses, technicians, pharmacists, salesmen, publicans, people in clerical positions and middle ranks of the Services, police sergeants.
- C2 Skilled manual workers/craftsmen who have served apprenticeships; foremen, manual workers with special qualifications such as long distance lorry drivers, security officers and lower grades of Services, police constables.
- D Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers, including labourers and mates of occupations in the C2 grade and serving apprenticeships; machine minders, farm labourers, bus and railway conductors, laboratory assistants, postmen, waiter/waitress, door-to-door and van salesmen.

- E Those of lowest levels of subsistence including pensioners (with state pension only)*, casual workers, the unemployed and other with minimum levels of income.

* Those with occupational pensions are coded by their previous occupation

Weighting

The Capibus sample is weighted by GB national figures for age, social grade, region and working status - within sex. Some large weighting factors were used in Wales as a result of a cumulative shortfall in interviews achieved there during the three weeks of fieldwork. This is not uncommon (high weighting factors) in an omnibus due to the number of weighting factors applied, but naturally not ideal either when the total sample needs to be upweighted also.

Problems with the supply of complete interviews for the omnibus (Capibus) in Wales during the first two weeks of this study in particular and therefore a cumulated weighting factor was applied to re-apportion the data to national representative figures. This meant the weighting factors used to upweight the data, in terms of total completes, increased each wave so the gap between achieved and target completes looks wide by the end of the 3 weeks.

Sample size and confidence in Wales:

Ideally we achieve a sample of 100 per weekly wave in Wales.

A sample size of 100 would give results that were accurate to a tolerance margin of +/-9.6% (at the 95% CI)

Our achieved sample of 65 (in week 6, for example) would give +/-12.2% (at the 95% CI)

So the accuracy has been affected by up to +/-2.6% points in Wales for those weeks.

Source of income definitions

The source of income comparative data is taken from the results of a face-to-face survey based on nationally representative sample of 2,123 adults across UK (weighted sample 2,000), conducted January 2012 by TNS-RI for Consumer Focus

1. Which of these is your main source of household income?

All adults

1: -Earnings from employment\self-employment	58%
2: -Private\occupational pension	9%
3: -State pension	11%
4: -Job seekers allowance	4%
5: -Other state benefits	7%
6: -Investment income	1%
7: -Other income	3%

Refused	6%
DK	1%

D2. Do you also receive any state benefits such as income support or tax credits?	All whose main income is earnings from employment/self-employment
1: Yes	22%
2: No	78%

Net recipients of benefits (main source of income is benefits OR earnings plus benefits): 35%

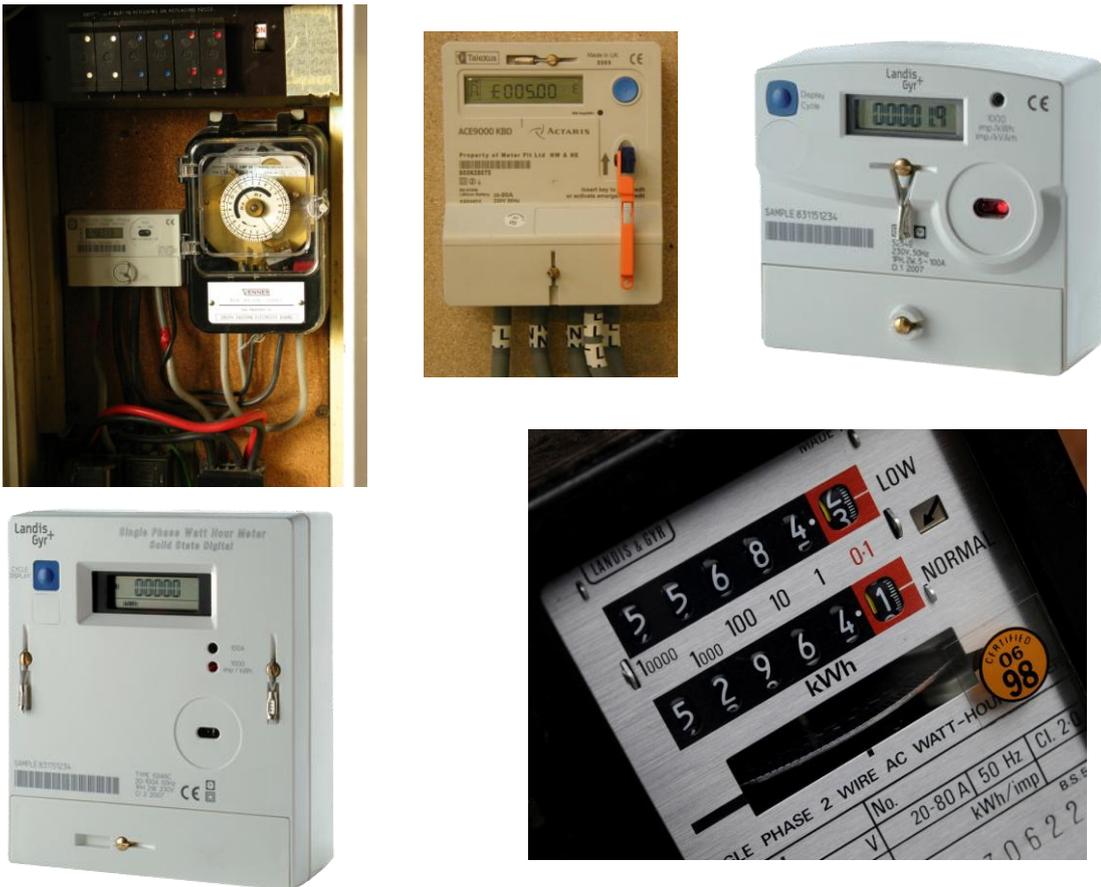
Ofgem data used for comparison

This data is taken from the results of a face-to-face survey conducted among a representative quota sample of 1,956 residents of Great Britain in the period 2-11 March 2012 for Ofgem. No link is yet available but it will be published by Ofgem as “Customer Engagement with the Energy market – Tracking Survey 2012”

Identification of consumers with Time of Use Tariffs

During the first week of fieldwork it became clear that respondents were incorrectly self identifying as being on a Time of Use tariff at QCF02. The first definition question was as follows, using this showcard:

QCF02 Do you have in your home an **off peak** electricity meter, or perhaps more than one meter, that may look like this?



403 respondents reported having a meter similar to those above, but then gave the answer 'no, not on an off-peak tariff' or 'don't know' at CF03, thereby casting doubt on whether they were legitimate ToU customers. It is suspected that many respondents have no clear memory of what their meter looks like; i.e. for many, they may all look the same. As such, it was necessary to rely on CF03 alone (see questionnaire) as the key identifier of consumers who have a ToU tariff.

We recommend the following approaches to more accurately identify ToU customers in any future research:

- 1) Check the meter for each respondent, to ensure it is a ToU compatible meter (requires detailed briefing for interviewer and in-home interview)
- 2) Ask the respondent for the name of the tariff they have and match this against a predetermined list of ToU tariffs, not permitting a “don’t know” response

Consumer Focus calculations of detriment to customers with off peak meters who use only average amount of off peak electricity

Figures assume 19% of units consumed at off peak period. Comparison is made between standard and Economy 7 medium use consumers. Red column indicates the difference in annual cost of Economy 7 compared to Standard rate.

See overleaf.

Standard - Medium User - MDD							Standard - Economy 7 - Medium User - MDD							Diff Standard Economy 7	
Supplier	Total Price	Gas Price	Elec Price	Elec SC	Elec Unit Cost		Supplier	Total Price	Gas Price	Elec Price	Elec SC	Elec Unit Cost			
BG	£1,198	£761	£458	£0	0.25p	0.11p	BG	£1,270	£761	£527	£0	0.27P	0.15P	0.05P	£72
EDF	£1,132	£685	£471	£51	0.12P		EDF	£1,155	£685	£444	£66	0.14P	0.05P		£23
E.ON	£1,156	£710	£487	£0	0.23P	0.11P	E.ON	£1,188	£710	£520	£0	0.24P	0.15P	0.05P	£32
Npower	£1,151	£718	£478	£0	0.17P	0.13P	Npower	£1,222	£718	£546	£0	0.24P	0.17P	0.04P	£71
SP	£1,176	£669	£466	£109	0.10P		SP	£1,162	£669	£453	£120	0.11P	0.05P		£-14
SSE	£1,157	£710	£462	£63	0.12P		SSE	£1,189	£710	£494	£79	0.14P	0.06P		£32
Standard - Medium User - QCC							Standard - Economy 7 - Medium User - QCC							Diff Standard Economy 7	
Supplier	Total Price	Gas Price	Elec Price	Elec SC	Elec Unit Cost		Supplier	Total Price	Gas Price	Elec Price	Elec SC	Elec Unit Cost			
BG	£1,265	£761	£458	£0	0.25p	0.11p	BG	£1,337	£761	£527	£0	0.27P	0.15P	0.05P	£72
EDF	£1,205	£685	£470	£51	0.12P		EDF	£1,230	£685	£494	£66	0.14P	0.05P		£25
E.ON	£1,257	£710	£487	£0	0.23P	0.11P	E.ON	£1,292	£710	£520	£0	0.24P	0.15P	0.05P	£35
Npower	£1,245	£718	£478	£0	0.17P	0.13P	Npower	£1,317	£718	£546	£0	0.24P	0.17P	0.04P	£72
SP	£1,350	£762	£535	£139	0.10P		SP	£1,317	£762	£503	£140	0.11P	0.05P		£-33
SSE	£1,231	£710	£462	£63	0.12P		SSE	£1,264	£710	£494	£79	0.14P	0.06P		£33

Qualitative Research – Profile of respondents interviewed as case studies

The profile of each respondent is given overleaf, followed by a short pen portrait of each case study. 15 interviews were completed, plus one extra interview with a further respondent who was particularly well adapted to making an E7 tariff work even though they had no storage heating.

Case study	Date	Tariff	Location	Social grade ¹⁶	Work status	Age	Heating system	Tenure	Tariff right for h/holds needs?	Heating right for h/holds needs?
Jennifer	10/03/12	Economy 7	South East	C1	Full time	62	Gas CH	Owned outright	Yes	Yes
Robert	13/03/12	Economy 7	West Midlands	C2	Self employed	39	Storage heating	Mortgage	Yes	Yes
Peter A	13/03/12	Economy 7	South East	B	Retired	71	Oil CH	Owned outright	Yes	Yes
Graham	13/03/12	Economy 7	West Midlands	B	Retired	67	Heat pump	Rented from local authority	Yes	Yes
Lawson	12/03/12	Dynamic teleswitching	Scotland	C2	Retired	81	Storage heating	Owned outright	Yes	Yes
John	13/03/12	Economy 7	East Midlands	C2	Retired	75	Wood burning stove	Owned outright	Yes	Yes
Wendy	14/03/12	Comfort Plus Control	Scotland	E	Unknown	38	Storage heating	Rented from local authority	No	No
Lisa	13/03/12	Economy 7	South East	E	Unemployed	19	Storage heating	Rented from private landlord	No	No
Jessica	13/03/12	Economy 7	West Midlands	C2	Full time	33	Storage heating	Housing association	No	No
Clive	09/03/12	Economy 7	East of England	C1	Self Employed	56	Storage heating	Rented from private landlord	No	No
Gary	13/03/12	Economy 7	Scotland	D	Unemployed	41	Gas CH	Rented from local authority	No	Yes
Susie	08/03/12	Economy 7	East of England	C1	Retired	53	Gas CH	Owned outright	No	Yes
Jo	13/03/12	Economy 7	South East	C1	Full time	54	Under floor heating	Owned outright	No	Yes
Peter B	09/03/12	Economy 7	East of England	C1	Long term illness	60	Oil CH	Housing association	No	No
Gillian	13/03/12	Economy 7	London	C1	Retired	59	Gas CH	Owned outright	No	Yes

¹⁶ See appendices for definitions of social grades

Case studies – Summaries

Group 1 case studies (tariff is right for their needs and they are satisfied with it)

1. Jennifer (851)

- **Summary:** Customer has recently come off an off peak tariff to an 'Age UK tariff'. There does not appear to be any evidence that the previous system was problematic and the respondent appeared to understand the old tariff, heating and was fairly satisfied. Has recently changed heating system to a 'wet' set up, and is about to retire so new tariff appears to be suitable for lifestyle
- **Profile:**
 - **Tariff:** Economy 7 (E.ON)
 - **Heating system:** Gas central heating
 - **Tariff right for household needs?** Yes
 - **Heating right for households needs?** Yes
 - **Age:** 62
 - **Sex:** Female
 - **Location:** South East
 - **Tenure:** Owned outright
 - **Housing type:** Terraced House
 - **Income:** £17,500 - £24,999
 - **Grade:** C1
 - **Working status:** Full time (30+ hours per week)
- **Problem/Issue:** Previous heating a bit dated, and since replaced. Customer has just come off TOU tariff
- **Understanding:** Good. Previously ran appliances on a timer.
- **Perceived advantages/disadvantages of TOU:** Not suitable for customer lifestyle. Suggests it would better suit larger households with more people & appliances
- **Switching behaviour:** Not done so. Potential savings so low, wasn't considered worth the effort.
- **Information/intervention requirement:** Not needed.

2. Robert (191)

Summary: Happy with tariff. House, lifestyle, heating & appliance usage broadly suitable for TOU.

- **Profile:**
 - **Tariff:** Economy 7 (nPower)
 - **Heating system:** Storage heating
 - **Tariff right for household needs?** Yes
 - **Heating right for households needs?** Yes
 - **Age:** 39
 - **Sex:** Male
 - **Location:** West Midlands
 - **Tenure:** Being bought on a mortgage
 - **Housing type:** Terraced house

- **Income:** £25,000
- **Social Grade:** C2
- **Working status:** Self Employed
- **Understanding:** Detailed & is clear on the tariff and how to use
- **Behaviour:** Appropriate for tariff
- **Perceived advantages/disadvantages of TOU:** Convenient. Possible to save a small amount of money. Would be better if times of the cheap rate was different
- **Switching behaviour:** Checks for deals, but current supplier usually the cheapest
- **Information/intervention requirement:** Would like gas CH for more control over heating

3. Peter A (1312)

- **Summary:** Loves economy 7 and thinks everyone should have it. No problems, no issues & fully understands and is satisfied with the status quo.
- **Profile:**
 - **Tariff:** Economy7 (EDF Energy)
 - **Heating system:** Oil central heating
 - **Tariff right for household needs?** Yes
 - **Heating right for households needs?** Yes
 - **Age:** 71
 - **Sex:** Male
 - **GOR:** South East
 - **Tenure:** Owned outright by household
 - **Housing type:** Detached house
 - **Income:** £25000+
 - **Social grade:** B
 - **Working status:** Retired
- **Understanding:** Detailed
- **Behaviour:** Takes advantage of cheap rates. Uses timer on water heating & appliances. Very occasional boosting
- **Perceived advantages/disadvantages of TOU:** Can save money if used correctly. Suits lifestyle. Thinks everyone would benefit, even if it was just a fridge taking advantage of the cheap rate.
- **Switching behaviour:** Not tried (brand loyal)
- **Information/intervention requirement:** No need.

4. Graham (808)

- **Summary:** Ideal TOU customer – lifestyle, household and consumption behaviour is ideal for TOU. Bills are cheap and customer is happy.
- **Profile:**
 - **Tariff:** Economy 7 (E.ON)
 - **Heating system:** Heat pump
 - **Tariff right for household needs?** Yes
 - **Heating right for households needs?** Yes
 - **Age:** 67
 - **Sex:** Male

- **Location:** West Midlands
 - **Tenure:** Belongs to housing association
 - **Housing type:** Semi detached
 - **Income:** £11,500 - £17,499
 - **Social Grade:** B
 - **Working status:** Retired
- **Understanding:** Detailed – full advantage taken
 - **Behaviour:** Strict - takes full advantage of tariff – including cooking things overnight to take advantage of the tariff.
 - **Perceived advantages/disadvantages of TOU:** It is a lot cheaper, especially if everything is used on a timer. Thinks it would suit retired people best. However, does not think it is suitable for those who can't work with the routine or have equipment fitted with timers.
 - **Switching behaviour:** Doesn't think it is worth the effort
 - **Information/intervention requirement:** Would probably change to a 'three part tariff' if one existed.

5. Lawson (151)

- **Summary:** The tariff is right for the needs of this retired couple. They have switched to cheaper tariffs, but have stayed with an off-peak set up. They use their heating & water efficiently and take full advantage of the tariff. They fully understand it and are very satisfied with the set up.

- **Profile:**

- **Tariff:** 'Night and day rate' (Scottish Power)
 - **Heating system:** Storage heating
 - **Tariff right for household needs?** Yes
 - **Heating right for households needs?** Yes
 - **Age:** 81
 - **Sex:** Male
 - **Location:** Scotland
 - **Tenure:** Owned outright by household
 - **Housing type:** Purpose built flat/maisonette/studio
 - **Income:** £17,500 - £24,999
 - **Social Grade:** C2
 - **Working status:** Retired
- **Understanding:** Understands the tariff & as such behaviour and lifestyle is appropriate.
 - **Behaviour:** Uses storage heating effectively.
 - **Perceived advantages/disadvantages of TOU:** Saves money. Easy to do.
 - **Switching behaviour:** Tried, but on hearing that, the existing supplier offered a better deal.
 - **Information/intervention requirement:** N/A

6. John (195)

- **Summary:** TOU tariff is suitable and consumer is fine with the tariff. Some irritation about energy competition, but no issues specific to the tariff or heating systems

- **Profile:**
 - **Tariff:** Economy 7
 - **Heating system:** Wood burning stove
 - **Tariff right for household needs?** Yes
 - **Heating right for households needs?** Yes
 - **Age:** 75
 - **Sex:** Male
 - **GOR:** East Midlands
 - **Tenure:** Owned outright by household
 - **Housing type:** Semi-detached house
 - **Income:** £6500 - £11499
 - **Social grade:** C2
 - **Working status:** Retired
- **Understanding:** Fairly detailed. Understands the tariff & behaviour suits tariff
- **Behaviour:** Behaviour and lifestyle suits the tariff
- **Perceived advantages/disadvantages of TOU:** Tariff has potential to provide cheaper energy. Would better suit people who are out all night.
- **Switching behaviour:** Has changed supplier, but finds the process irritating. Not a fan of the competitive energy market
- **Information/intervention requirement:** Simplify the energy market (doesn't want competitive market)

Group 2 case studies (Have storage heating; tariff not right, dissatisfied)

1. Wendy (1176)

- Summary: Respondent is on a protected tariff – so options are limited. Does not take advantage of storage heating and uses boost function on water supply. Does not use big ticket appliances during off peak times. Medium level of understanding of tariff, but behaviour/lifestyle not appropriate for this. Would benefit from either gas central heating/water or detailed information on when to use appliances. A change in the timing of off-peak period may help. Supplier needs to resolve issues with incorrect meter readings for rates one and two.
-
- Profile:
 - **Tariff:** Comfort Plus Control (Scottish Power)
 - **Heating system:** Storage heating
 - **Tariff right for household needs?** No
 - **Heating right for households needs?** No
 - **Age:** 38
 - **Sex:** Female
 - **GOR:** Scotland
 - **Tenure:** Mortgage
 - **Housing type:** Purpose built flat/maisonette/studio
 - **Income:** £6500 - £11499
 - **Social grade:** E
 - **Working status:** Unknown

- **Problem/Issue:** 1) supplier was taking the wrong readings from meters; took time to resolve. 2) Respondent doesn't take advantage of the tariff – behaviour and consumption patterns not appropriate. Is on a protected tariff, so probably unable to change
- **Understanding:** Understands the tariff in terms of two rates, but behaviour/lifestyle is not appropriate for this – barriers to using appliances at peak rates.
- **Behaviour:** Behaviour/lifestyle is not appropriate for this – barriers to using appliances at peak rates. Some energy efficiency measures in place to save energy. Doesn't use the storage heating due to previous experience.
- **Perceived advantages/disadvantages of TOU:** Would be good if it was possible to run appliances such as a washing machine with a timer, without annoying neighbours. The times of the cheap rates are inconvenient
- **Switching behaviour:** Unable to switch – is on a protected tariff.
- **Information/intervention requirement:** New housing/council to install gas central heating/water (is on a waiting list); respondent is on a protected tariff. Supplier hasn't been particularly helpful. There were also issues with the metering.

2. Lisa (1092)

- **Summary:** Lifestyle inappropriate for TOU. At home during the day using a halogen heater alongside various heating devices for snakes, fish and a bearded dragon. Also inappropriate for current billing (assumed quarterly) – as such supplier is putting the couple on a PPM.

Very low engagement with electricity use. Poor structural energy efficiency. Unable to switch or introduce any efficiency measures (the water heating doesn't work).

Unlikely to use any further information – unable to read bills due to literacy issues.

- **Profile:**
 - **Tariff:** Customer doesn't know. Interviewer assumes Economy 7
 - **Heating system:** Mixture. Has storage heating but doesn't use it. Uses halogen heaters on demand.
 - **Tariff right for household needs?** No
 - **Heating right for households needs?** No
 - **Age:** 19
 - **Sex:** Female
 - **GOR:** South East
 - **Tenure:** Rented from a private landlord
 - **Housing type:** Converted flat/maisonette/studio
 - **Income:** £6500 – £11499
 - **Social grade:** E
 - **Working status:** Unemployed and seeking work
- **Problem/Issue:** Customer has large bills due to relatively heavy daytime peak rate energy usage and is unhappy with the price. Storage heating not used and immersion heating not being used as it is broken. Structural energy efficiency also a barrier to effective energy use.
- **Understanding:** Very low level of understanding of the tariff

- **Behaviour:** Uses most energy during peak times; has multiple 'vivariums' for a variety of exotic pets that require heating 24 hours a day.
- **Perceived advantages/disadvantages of TOU:** Assumes it is expensive, but doesn't understand this in relation to the off/on peak rates. Doesn't understand tariff to give an opinion either way.
- **Switching behaviour:** Customer has not tried to switch. Has assumed this is landlord's prerogative. Unlikely to be able to switch anyway due to levels of debt.
- **Information/intervention requirement:** Would be better off on a standard rate tariff and with a PPM. Would benefit from working water heating.

3. Jessica (221)

- **Summary:** Problematic situation with metering. Meters were not reading the electricity correctly and needed replacing. Does not use any appliances at night. Does not like storage heating, but does appear to use these and the water heating appropriately for the tariff. Would like more information on how to work with the tariff, use heating, switch supplier and deal with E.ON.
- **Profile:**
 - **Tariff:** Economy 7
 - **Heating system:** Storage heating
 - **Tariff right for household needs?** No
 - **Heating right for households needs?** No
 - **Age:** 33
 - **Sex:** Female
 - **Location:** West Midlands
 - **Tenure:** Belongs to a housing association
 - **Housing type:** Semi detached
 - **Income:** -
 - **Social Grade:** C2
 - **Working status:** Have paid job – Full time (30+ hours per week)

- **Problem/Issue:** Problematic metering; both the meters are giving incorrect readings and there have been issues with faulty metering equipment.
- **Understanding:** Has a good understanding of the tariff.
- **Behaviour:** Unable to take full advantage of the tariff; doesn't want to run noisy appliances at night (such as a washing machine or a vacuum cleaner). Uses water heating effectively, but storage heating does not work at the right times.
- **Perceived advantages/disadvantages of TOU:** Unable to mention any advantages.
- **Switching behaviour:** Will do so once the metering issues are resolved.
- **Information/intervention requirement:** Information of the use of storage heating would be useful. Information on how to address the issues with the faulty meters might help.

4. Clive (1074)

- **Summary:** Tariff and heating not causing significant issues. Could save more money through more efficient appliance use and efficiency measures (for Landlord – e.g. re-fitting double glazing). Storage heating possibly a little faulty. Information on bills could be

simplified. Not entirely sure of the timing of the cheap rates (and is probably using 5 hours peak rate energy, while thinking it is off peak).

- Profile:
 - **Tariff:** Economy 7 (Utility Warehouse)
 - **Heating system:** Storage heating
 - **Tariff right for household needs?** No
 - **Heating right for households needs?** No
 - **Age:** 56
 - **Sex:** Male
 - **Location:** Eastern
 - **Tenure:** Rented from a private landlord
 - **Housing type:** Converted flat/maisonette/studio
 - **Income:** -
 - **Social Grade:** C1
 - **Working status:** Self employed
- **Problem/Issue:** No problems reported by the customer, though the customer is dissatisfied with the tariff. However, there are indications that the storage heating is not being used effectively. Also does not use big ticket appliances at night.
- **Understanding:** Understands the tariff well
- **Behaviour:** Doesn't want to change the times at which major appliances are used to get the most use out of the tariff.
- **Perceived advantages/disadvantages of TOU:** Does not give advantages. Thinks that unless timers are installed, it is hard to get much benefit from the tariff.
- **Switching behaviour:** Is unsure whether it is possible to change supplier when in a rented property without landlord's permission.
- **Information/intervention requirement:** Installation of time switches would be beneficial. Information on how to better use the immersion heating would be beneficial.

Group 3 case studies (No storage heating, tariff not right, dissatisfied)

1. Gary (92)

- **Summary:** Respondent is not taking advantage of the tariff. Does not have storage heating and little energy is consumed during off peak times
- **Profile:**
 - **Tariff:** Economy 7 (Scottish Power)
 - **Heating system:** Gas Central Heating
 - **Tariff right for household needs?** No
 - **Heating right for households needs?** Yes
 - **Age:** 41
 - **Sex:** Male
 - **GOR:** Scotland
 - **Tenure:** Rented from Local Authority
 - **Dwelling type:** Terraced house
 - **Income:** £6500 - £11499
 - **Social grade:** D
 - **Working status:** Unemployed and seeking work

- **Problem/Issue:** Lifestyle, appliances and behaviour not suitable for a TOU tariff
- **Understanding:** Understands the tariff, but does not take advantage of it.
- **Behaviour:** Energy use highest at peak rate times. Does not have storage heating or water heating system that would take advantage of the tariff. No appliances used at night (due to public service advertising that advises turning off appliances at night or while out of the house).
- **Perceived advantages/disadvantages of TOU:** Customer understands that if appliances were put on time switches money could be saved. Also believes that the tariff is more suitable for those with storage heating. Lifestyle doesn't suit the tariff & therefore sees this as a disadvantage.
- **Switching behaviour:** Switches regularly
- **Information/intervention requirement:** n/a

2. Susie (1915)

- **Summary:** Tariff is not causing any detriment, though lifestyle and heating/water heating method doesn't need TOU tariff. Dissatisfaction is mainly with the supplier & ambiguity of information from supplier. Would benefit more from standard rate
- **Profile:**
 - **Tariff:** Economy 7 (EDF)
 - **Heating system:** Gas Central Heating
 - **Tariff right for household needs?** No
 - **Heating right for households needs?** Yes
 - **Age:** 53
 - **Sex:** Female
 - **Location:** Eastern
 - **Tenure:** Owned outright by household
 - **Housing type:** Terraced house
 - **Income:** £17,500 - £24,999
 - **Social Grade:** C1
 - **Working status:** Retired
- **Problem/Issue:** Tariff is not causing any detriment, though lifestyle and heating/water heating method doesn't need TOU tariff. Dissatisfaction is mainly with the supplier & ambiguity of information from supplier. Would benefit more from standard rate.
- **Understanding:** Understands tariff and how it works
- **Behaviour:** Tries to put on big ticket appliances at night. Customer used to have timer switches in previous property, but hasn't done so in current property.
- **Perceived advantages/disadvantages of TOU:** Customer feels that if the benefits of the tariff were better explained to consumers, with demonstrations of how to use timers, the full benefits could be realised. However, the customer does not feel the current level of information on the tariff is sufficient.
- **Switching behaviour:** Has switched – from E.ON to EDF Energy
- **Information/intervention requirement:** Clearer tariff details and more direction on getting the most out of the off peak rate.

3. Jo (1187)

- **Summary:** Inherited TOU due to dual meters in household and previous storage heating. Has removed storage heating (replaced with under-floor heating). Does not use appliances at night and not likely to do so. Is not very unsatisfied, but would like to know if the current tariff is really suitable – thinks the idea of a dual rate (with daytime more expensive) is 'outrageous'. Knows where to find information about it, but doesn't seem inclined to look into it in any detail.
- **Profile:**
 - **Tariff:** Economy 7 (EDF Energy)
 - **Heating system:** Underfloor heating
 - **Tariff right for household needs?** No
 - **Heating right for households needs?** Yes
 - **Age:** 54
 - **Sex:** Female
 - **GOR:** South East
 - **Tenure:** Owned outright by household
 - **Dwelling type:** Terraced house
 - **Income:** £17500 - £24999
 - **Social grade:** C1
 - **Working status:** Have paid job – full time (30+ hours per week)
- **Problem/Issue:** Heating not suitable for TOU, but water heating is. Doesn't really want to be on a TOU tariff, but is unsure as to whether changing tariff would be cheaper. Few negative effects other than problems with billing.
- **Understanding:** Understands tariff and how it works
- **Behaviour:** Does not run appliances at night. Does run immersion heating during off peak times.
- **Perceived advantages/disadvantages of TOU:** The tariff works well with immersion heating, but the customer is not convinced of the cost savings offered by a TOU tariff. Also not convinced that the tariff is worthwhile unless you have storage heating
- **Switching behaviour:** Knows how to but hasn't switched.
- **Information/intervention requirement:** Would like more tailored information about how to reduce energy. Would also like to know categorically if the tariff is the cheapest way to pay for electricity with their existing set up.

4. Peter B (191)

- **Summary:** PPM customer with debt living in council housing. Has oil heating (not used) & an immersion heater for water. Poorly insulated house. Not using appliances at cheap rate. Unable to switch due to debt levels. Customer's problems are with the debt predominately. Fairly happy with the tariff and would recommend it to others
- **Profile:**
 - **Tariff:** Economy 7 (EDF Energy)
 - **Heating system:** Oil heating
 - **Tariff right for household needs?** No
 - **Heating right for households needs?** No
 - **Age:** 60
 - **Sex:** Male

- **Location:** Eastern
- **Tenure:** Belongs to a housing association
- **Housing type:** Semi-detached house
- **Income:** £6,500 - £11,499
- **Social Grade:** C1
- **Working status:** Not in work because of long term illness of disability
- **Problem/Issue:** Debt, poor structural energy efficiency and inability to use appliances at off peak times. Not satisfied with oil heating.
- **Understanding:** Understands tariff and how it works
- **Behaviour:** Does not run appliances at night, but water is heated during off peak times, on a time switch. Some structural energy efficiency measures may not be effective, such as badly made double glazing
- **Perceived advantages/disadvantages of TOU:** Not convinced of any advantages because of the times of the off peak hours. Thinks it would benefit younger people who can stay up late to use electricity during off peak times.
- **Switching behaviour:** Unable to switch due to debt
- **Information/intervention requirement:** Doesn't want any information. Would like the cheap rate to start earlier.

5. Gillian (1273)

Summary: Unclear why respondent said that the tariff was unsuitable during the quant stage. Behaviour and lifestyle suits tariff. Happy with it and saves money. May be due to having gas central heating she doesn't consider herself to be suitable for ToU tariff.

- **Profile:**
 - **Tariff:** Economy 7 (British Gas)
 - **Heating system:** Gas central heating
 - **Tariff right for household needs?** No
 - **Heating right for households needs?** Yes
 - **Age:** 59
 - **Sex:** Female
 - **GOR:** London
 - **Tenure:** Owned outright by household
 - **Dwelling type:** Terraced house
 - **Income:** £11500 - £17499
 - **Social grade:** C1
 - **Working status:** Retired
- **Problem/Issue:** No problems identified, though the heating systems are not the most appropriate for a TOU tariff
- **Understanding:** Respondent has a detailed knowledge of the tariff
- **Behaviour:** Runs appliances during off peak times to take advantage of the tariff.
- **Perceived advantages/disadvantages of TOU:** The tariff suits the customer's lifestyle. The customer finds it convenient, and saves money. Seen as particularly beneficial for people who are up all night or who work shifts. No disadvantages cited.
- **Switching behaviour:** Has previously switched supplier, but did not see this as advantageous
- **Information/intervention requirement:** n/a

Extra interview – Sally (not recruited from the omnibus – satisfied with tariff – recorded as Group 1)

Summary: Clued in user with gas central heating and gas water heating, but runs most appliances at night on timer switches. Knows how to get the benefits from the tariff and lifestyle suits this. Lives in old property (solid walls) in rural area. Not much potential for insulation, though has loft insulation and secondary glazing.

- **Profile:**
 - **Tariff:** Economy 7 (EDF Energy)
 - **Heating system:** Gas central heating
 - **Tariff right for household needs?** Yes
 - **Heating right for households needs?** Yes
 - **Sex:** Female
 - **Working status:** Self employed (home worker)
- **Problem/Issue:**
- **Understanding:** Respondent has a detailed knowledge of the tariff and good control over power usage for her home and home office combined
- **Behaviour:** Runs appliances during off peak times to take advantage of the tariff, though works from home, so has a computer on all day. 30% of consumption is at night rate. Location isolate from other homes means appliances can be run at night.
- **Perceived advantages/disadvantages of TOU:** The tariff suits the customer's lifestyle. The customer finds it convenient, and saves money. No disadvantages cited; though did say that it wasn't convenient or cheap before timer switches were installed
- **Switching behaviour:** Has previously switched supplier, and has used switching websites to check for deals. Current supplier cheapest. Bills aren't a particularly helpful information source in the process.
- **Information/intervention requirement:** none

Main Omnibus Questionnaire

INTERVIEWER THIS SECTION DOES NOT HAVE SHOWCARDS. ON SCREEN INSTRUCTIONS WILL INDICATE WHEN TO SHOW AND WHEN NOT TO SHOW SCREEN TO THE RESPONDENT.

PLEASE NOTE: THERE MAY BE QUESTIONS THAT ALLOW DON'T KNOW AND NONE OF THESE. PLEASE TYPE DK FOR DON'T KNOW AND NULL FOR NONE OF THESE

I'd now like to talk to you about home energy ...

ASK ALL

CF01.

Are you responsible or jointly responsible for your mains electricity bill?
(SP)

1. Yes, solely
2. Yes, jointly
3. No
4. No mains electricity

SCRIPTER - IF NO or No Mains (CODE 3 or 4) AT CF01, CLOSE.

CF02. SHOW A4 COLOUR PROMPT OF METERS

Do you have in your home an **off peak** electricity meter, or perhaps more than one meter, that may look like this?
(SP, Allow DK)

1. Yes
2. No

CF03 SHOW SCREEN

Can I just check, are you on one of these **off peak** electricity rates that have two or three different unit rates or prices – Economy 7 is a popular example? IF YES: Which?
(SP, Allow DK)

1. Economy 7 (any supplier)
2. Economy 10 (from EDF Energy, E.ON, npower or Southern Electric)
3. Eco20:20 (from EDF Energy)
4. Warmwise (from EDF Energy)
5. Heatwise (from E.ON)
6. Super Tariff (from npower)
7. Comfort Plus (from ScottishPower)
8. Total Heat, Total Control (from Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE))
9. Superdeal/Flexiheat (from Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE))
10. Other off peak tariff (Please Specify)

11. No, not on off peak tariff

SCRIPTER – IF RESPONDENT DOES NOT HAVE OFF PEAK METER OR ON TOU TARIFF (RESPONDENTS WHO SELECT CODE 1 AT CF02 OR ANY CODE EXCLUDING NO/DK ON CF03) – CLOSE SURVEY.

ASK ALL WITH OFF PEAK METER OR ON TOU TARIFF, AS ABOVE.
CF04.

What is the **main** heating you use in your home?
(SP, Allow DK)

1. Electric storage heaters
2. Gas central heating
3. Other gas heating (eg single point gas fire)
4. Solid fuel central heating
5. Oil central heating
6. Other electric heating (eg single point electric fires or convection heaters)
7. Other solid fuel heating
8. Calor gas, propane or LPG
9. District heating
10. Other (eg underfloor heating, heat pump etc)

ASK CF05 IF STORAGE HEATERS USED FOR MAIN HEATING (CODE 1 AT CF4), OTHERWISE CONTINUE TO CF6.
CF05.

Were your storage heaters in your home when you moved in, were they fitted for the first time **since** you have been there, or did you have old ones replaced since you have been there?
(SP, Allow DK)

1. In home when moved in
2. Fitted for first time since moved in
3. Old ones replaced since moved in

(NEW SCREEN)

INTERVIEWER: SHOW SCREEN UNTIL OTHERWISE SPECIFIED.

ASK CF06-08 OF ALL WITH OFF PEAK METER OR ON TOU TARIFF, I.E ALL WHO SELECT CODE 1 AT CF02 OR ANY CODE EXCLUDING NO/DK ON CF03
CF06

Using this list, how satisfied are you with your home's heating system?
(SP)

1. Completely satisfied
2. Very satisfied
3. Fairly satisfied
4. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
5. Fairly dissatisfied
6. Very dissatisfied
7. Completely dissatisfied

CF07.

Leaving aside the increases in electricity prices that have affected **everyone** over the last year or so, how satisfied are you with having different electricity rates at different times, some of them off-peak?

(SP)

1. Completely satisfied
2. Very satisfied
3. Fairly satisfied
4. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
5. Fairly dissatisfied
6. Very dissatisfied
7. Completely dissatisfied

CF08.

In addition to heating, it is possible to run other household appliances at cheap rates, for example at night. This might include immersion heaters, washing machines and so on. Do you run other appliances at times to take advantage of cheap rates?

(SP)

Yes

No

ASK ALL CODING 1 AT CF08.

CF09

How satisfied are you with the convenience of running appliances at cheap rates?

(SP)

1. Completely satisfied
2. Very satisfied
3. Fairly satisfied
4. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
5. Fairly dissatisfied
6. Very dissatisfied
7. Completely dissatisfied

ASK CF10-17 OF ALL WITH OFF PEAK METER OR ON TOU TARIFF, I.E ALL WHO SELECT CODE 1 AT CF02 OR ANY CODE EXCLUDING NO/DK ON CF03

CF10.

Using the list on this screen, how well do you feel you understand your electricity metering and bills? Specifically your off peak tariff.

(SP)

1. Very well
2. Fairly well
3. Not very well
4. Not at all well

CF11.

How often do you read the electricity meter or meters yourself, either for your own records or to give the supplier the readings?

(SP)

1. Monthly or more often
2. Quarterly (approx every three months)
3. Just occasionally
4. Never (but know how to)
5. Would not know how to read them

(NEW SCREEN)

INTERVIEWER: TURN SCREEN BACK TO OUT OF VIEW OF RESPONDENT.

CF12.

From whom, if anyone, have you ever tried to get help or advice on the subject of your electricity metering and billing, or the best way to use your heating system?

DO NOT PROMPT

(CODES 1-10 ARE MP, CODE 11 IS SP)

1. Electricity supplier
2. Citizen's Advice Bureau or other local charity
3. Local council
4. Consumer Direct/Energywatch
5. Energy Saving Trust
6. Ofgem (the regulator)
7. Family or friends
8. Landlord or Housing Association
9. Website, such as Money Saving Expert
10. Other
11. None, never tried

CF13.

Do you believe your electricity metering and billing, the off peak tariff you are on, is the right one for your household's needs?

(SP, Allow DK)

1. Yes
2. No

(NEW SCREEN)

INTERVIEWER: SHOW SCREEN UNTIL OTHERWISE SPECIFIED.

CF14.

Which of these options, if any, do you believe are available to you to make your home more energy efficient, that is, to spend less money on energy while keeping the home just as warm? What **could** you do?

(CODES 1-14 ARE MP, CODE 15 IS SP, Allow DK)

1. Fit double glazing
2. Insulate the loft (for the first time)
3. Add more insulation to the loft

4. Fit cavity wall insulation
5. Fit other insulation
6. Change my heating system
7. Switch to cheaper energy supplier
8. Switch to different electricity rate
9. Exchange my meter for a standard meter
10. Turn the heating down/don't use heating so much
11. Switch off appliances/use them less
12. Try to use appliances more during the times of cheaper rates
13. Buy more efficient appliance/ones that use less energy
14. Take other measures to make home more energy efficient eg electricity generation, like solar panels
15. Nothing. No options available to me

CF15.

Which of these options, if any, has been done in your home?

CODE NULL FOR NONE.

(MP, Allow DK & NULL)

STATEMENTS

Since moving in

Done previously, before you moved in

CODES

1. Fitted double glazing
2. Insulated the loft (for the first time)
3. Added insulation to the loft
4. Fitted cavity wall insulation
5. Fitted other insulation
6. Changed my heating system
7. Switched to cheaper energy supplier
8. Switched to different tariff
9. Exchanged my meter for a standard meter
10. Turned the heating down/don't use heating so much
11. Switched off appliances/use them less
12. Tried to use appliances more during the times of cheaper rates
13. Bought more efficient appliance/one that uses less energy
14. Taken other measures to make home more energy efficient eg electricity generation, like solar panels

CF16.

Do you believe your **main** heating, that is <INSERT ANSWER TO CF04> is the right one for your household's needs?

(SP, Allow DK)

Yes

No

CF17.

Which, if any, of these aspects of your electricity metering and billing have you found to be a problem in your current home?

CODE NULL FOR NONE OF THESE
(MP, Allow NULL)

1. I'm on the wrong tariff/rate, or the wrong kind of meter
2. I don't know what time of day the cheaper rate electricity period is
3. The electricity company has recently made mistakes on my meter readings or bills
4. My bills are higher than I would expect compared to my neighbours, friends or relatives
5. I would like to switch electricity supplier but I am not allowed to
6. I would like to switch electricity supplier but I don't understand how to compare suppliers properly
7. I would like to stop having an off peak rate and pay for electricity at one rate
8. It is not practical for me to run appliances like washing machines and tumble dryers at night, so I don't make best use of the off peak electricity

ONLY ASK CF18 TO THOSE EXPERIENCING PROBLEMS (CF17 CODES 1-8),
OTHERWISE CONTINUE TO CH19.

CF18

Which statement on this screen best describes the **impact** of the problems you have experienced on you or your household?

(SP)

- A. It doesn't worry me at all
- B. It is an irritation, but nothing serious
- C. It causes considerable upset or discomfort
- D. It is causing us upset or discomfort, but also ill health or financial problems

ASK CF19 OF ALL WITH OFF PEAK METER OR ON TOU TARIFF, I.E ALL WHO SELECT
CODE 1 AT CF02 OR ANY CODE EXCLUDING NO/DK ON CF03

CF19.

Have you ever tried to switch your electricity supplier since you have lived here?

(SP)

1. Yes
2. No

SCRIPTER - GO TO CF24 IF CODE 2 SELECTED AT CF19

ASK ALL WITH OFF PEAK METER OR ON TOU TARIFF & CODE 1 ON CF19
CF20.

Did you succeed in switching to another supplier?

(SP)

1. Yes
2. No

SCRIPTER - GO TO CF23 IF CODE 2 SELECTED AT CF20

ASK CF20 AND CF21 OF ALL WITH OFF PEAK METER OR ON TOU TARIFF & CODE 1
ON CF19 & CODE 1 ON CF20

CF21.

How did you make the switch?

(SP, allow DK/Can't Remember)

1. Through a salesman
2. On the phone
3. On the supplier's own website
4. Through a price comparison website
5. Some other way

CF22.

Did switching supplier make your electricity bills cheaper?

(SP, Allow DK)

Yes

No

ASK ALL WITH OFF PEAK METER OR ON TOU TARIFF & CODE 1 ON CF19

CF23.

Did you experience any difficulties in the switching process? IF YES: Were they related to the off peak rate you are on?

(SP)

1. Yes, difficulties experienced, related to off peak rate
2. Yes, difficulties experienced, but NOT due to off peak rate
3. No, no difficulties

ASK ALL WITH OFF PEAK METER OR ON TOU TARIFF

CF24.

Which, if any, of these kinds of information would really make a difference to you in helping you save money?

(SP, Allow None)

1. Information on when it is cheaper to use electricity
2. Information on how to compare prices between suppliers
3. Information on how to switch supplier
4. Information on understanding your electricity bill and reading your meters
5. Information on how to use storage heaters and other appliances you use at off peak times

ASK ALL WITH OFF PEAK METER OR ON TOU TARIFF

CF25.

Do you have mains gas in your home?

(SP)

1. Yes
2. No

ASK ALL WITH OFF PEAK METER OR ON TOU TARIFF

CF26.

Which of these best describes your type of home?

(SP)

1. Terraced house
2. Semi-detached house
3. Detached house
4. Purpose built flat/maisonette/studio
5. Converted flat/maisonette/studio

6. Other

ASK ALL WITH OFF PEAK METER OR ON TOU TARIFF
CF27.

Who is your electricity supplier?
(SP, Allow DK)

1. British Gas
2. Co operative Energy
3. Ebico
4. Ecotricity
5. EDF Energy
6. E.ON
7. First Energy
8. Good Energy
9. Green Energy
10. LoCO2
11. Npower
12. OVO
13. ScottishPower
14. Spark Energy
15. SSE/Southern Electric/Atlantic Energy/SWALEC/Scottish Hydro
16. Utilita
17. Utility Warehouse
18. Other

ASK ALL WITH OFF PEAK METER OR ON TOU TARIFF
CF28.

How do you pay for the electricity you use?
(SP)

1. Monthly Direct Debit
2. Pay by cheque, cash or card on receipt of your bill
3. Prepayment Meter
4. Fuel Direct (where a set amount is deducted from your benefits before you receive them)
5. Weekly/Fortnightly payment scheme
6. Payment card/book that I use whenever I choose
7. Other method

ASK ALL WITH OFF PEAK METER OR ON TOU TARIFF
CF29.

Which of these types of living and working pattern **best** fits your household?
CODE NULL FOR NONE.
(SP, Allow NULL)

- A. I am/We are at work weekdays and at home in the evenings and at weekends
- B. I am/We are often at home all day during the week
- C. I am/We are working shifts so I am/we are at home at irregular times
- D. The home is often empty, even overnight, because I am/we are away

ASK ALL WITH OFF PEAK METER OR ON TOU TARIFF
CF30a.

Which of these is your main source of household income?
(SP, Allow DK and Ref)

1. Earnings from employment or self-employment
2. Private or occupational pension
3. State pension
4. Job seekers allowance
5. Other state benefits
6. Investment income
7. Other income

SCRIPTER - ONLY ASK CF30B IF CODES 1 OR 2 AT Q31A, OTHERS GO TO CF31A

CF30b.

Do you also receive any state benefits such as income support or tax credits?
(SP)

1. Yes
2. No

ASK ALL WITH OFF PEAK METER OR ON TOU TARIFF
CF31a.

We are conducting further research on off peak electricity rates on behalf of Consumer Focus, which wants to understand in more detail about how people use these tariffs. Would you be prepared to answer some more questions about this subject if one of our interviewers was to come and see you? There would be a small payment for your time.

(SP)

Yes
No

SCRIPTER ONLY ASK CF31B IF CODE 1 selected at Q31A
CF31b.

And would you be willing for Consumer Focus to contact you directly in order to use your name and actual experiences in their reports to the Government and the energy industry?
(SP)

Yes
No

CLOSE

(New Screen)

INTERVIEWER: NOW PLEASE DO NOT SHOW SCREEN UNTIL OTHERWISE
INSTRUCTED

Topic guide for depth interviews

Time of use tariffs Topic Guide (FINAL)

Total: 30 mins

Section	Objective	Time
<p>1. Introduction</p> <p>INTRODUCE SELF, INDEPENDENCE OF IPSOS MORI AND FORMAT FOR THE INTERVIEW. YOU MAY SAY THE STUDY IS FOR CONSUMER FOCUS. THEY ARE LOOKING AT THE VIEWS OF PEOPLE WHO ARE ON OFF- PEAK ELECTRICITY RATES AND WHAT THEY THINK OF THEM AND THE WAY THEY HEAT THEIR HOMES AND USE ELECTRICITY</p> <p>ASK PERMISSION TO RECORD: EMPHASISE CONFIDENTIALITY, EXPLAIN IT IS FOR OUR ANALYSIS ONLY. NOT TO BE PASSED TO CLIENT</p> <p>APOLOGISE THAT WE MAY NEED TO ASK SOME OF THE SAME QUESTIONS AS WERE ASKED IN THE FIRST INTERVIEW, BUT THIS GIVES YOU A CHANCE TO EXPLAIN BETTER WHAT YOU MEAN</p>	<p>Ensure they know what it's about and feel comfortable to speak freely</p>	<p>2 mins</p>
<p>2. Experience of using Off Peak rate</p> <p>Identification and understanding of tariff <i>(INTERVIEWER NOTE: please do not use the term 'tariff' when speaking with respondents)</i></p> <p>What is the name of the Off Peak rate you are on? With which supplier?</p> <p>(INTERVIEWER: YOU MAY REFER TO TARIFF BY ITS NAME FROM NOW ON eg ECONOMY 7, RATHER THAN "OFF PEAK RATE")</p> <p>ASK TO SEE METER(S). TAKE PHOTO IF POSSIBLE</p> <p>Can you explain to me how this Off Peak rate works – for example, does it make your electricity cheaper at certain</p>	<p>Establish all the details about their tariff, their heating system and how they use appliances and overall understanding</p>	<p>10 mins</p>

<p>times? What times? How does this help you? (INTERVIEWER: WE ARE INTERESTED IN HOW WELL THE RESPONDENT CAN EXPLAIN IT. Eg DO THEY KNOW PRECISELY WHEN ELECTRICITY IS CHEAPER?)</p> <p>Bills</p> <p>How do you pay for your electricity (quarterly bill, direct debit, prepayment meter, some other way)?</p> <p>How easy is it to read your own meter? Do you do that and report readings to the supplier? Ever had any issues with meter readings? What issues?</p> <p>Is it possible to see a recent bill or Annual Statement? TAKE PHOTO IF POSSIBLE (COVERING NAME/ADDRESS DETAILS) Can you show me how much electricity you use at cheap rate and at other rates? (INTERVIEWER: SUMMARISE FOR RECORDING WHETHER RESPONDENT IS ABLE TO TELL)</p> <p>Lifestyle</p> <p>Is there usually someone at home all day, or does everyone go out to work or study? How many people in the household? When do you use most electricity?</p> <p>How do you think your electricity bills compare with other people you know in the same circumstances? IF DIFFERENT: Why do you think that is?</p> <p>Behaviour</p> <p>In general, how, if at all, would you say you take advantage of your Off Peak rate by using electricity at cheaper times of the day? (THEY MAY MENTION HEATING, WATER HEATING AND APPLIANCES – PROMPT AS BELOW IF NECESSARY)</p> <p>How do you heat your home? IF STORAGE HEATERS PROBE EXACTLY HOW AND WHEN USED. How well does your heating work (compared to other types of heating)? TAKE PHOTOS IF POSSIBLE. IF PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED ASK: What the problems with the heating? What have you tried to do about it? Do you have to use other heating as well as your storage heaters, or use them on “boost” at expensive times of the day?</p> <p>How do you heat the water? PROBE FOR WHETHER ANY PROVISION TO USE OFF PEAK ELECTRICITY TO</p>		
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<p>HEAT THE WATER EG A TIMER. How does that work, just during cheap periods or at other times too? TAKE PHOTOS IF POSSIBLE. IF TIMER USED: Does using the timer provide you with enough hot water when you need it, or do you need to “boost” it at more expensive times?</p> <p>Do you run any other appliances at cheap periods to take advantage of the lower price electricity? PROBE FOR FULL DETAILS OF EACH – WHAT APPLIANCE, WHEN USED, HOW MUCH SAVED, HOW CONVENIENT IS IT?</p> <p>How energy efficient do you think your home is? For example do you have loft insulation, double glazing, cavity wall insulation and so on? Would you say it is a warm home? Have you done anything else to try and save money on electricity – such as turned the heating down or simply not used the heating?</p> <p>Evaluation</p> <p>How long have you been on this Off Peak rate? Have you had an Off Peak rate before? What did you have before that? How did the experience compare?</p> <p>Overall how satisfied are you with your Off Peak rate?</p> <p>And how satisfied are you with your heating system?</p>		
<p>3. Advantages of being on an Off Peak rate</p> <p>What would you say are the advantages or benefits, if any, of being on an Off Peak rate ? Any others? PROBE FULLY FOR DETAILS</p> <p>PROMPT IF NOT MENTIONED:</p> <p>Saves money?</p> <p>Convenient?</p> <p>Suits lifestyle? (IF YES: in what way?) (IF USED TO BUT DOES NOT NOW ASK: What has changed for you?)</p> <p>Cheaper than changing tariff or heating system? (What would need to change?)</p>	<p>Positives about Off Peak tariff</p>	<p>5 mins</p>

<p>Would you recommend it to others? What sort of people or lifestyle/circumstances would it suit best? PROBE EXPLANATIONS GIVEN</p>		
<p>4. Disadvantages of being on an Off Peak rate</p> <p>What would you say are the disadvantages or problems, if any, associated with being on an Off Peak rate ? Any others? PROBE FULLY FOR DETAILS</p> <p>PROMPT IF NOT MENTIONED:</p> <p>Works out expensive? IF YES: In what way? Why?</p> <p>Unable to take advantage of cheap rates? (In what sense? Why?)</p> <p>Don't understand the tariff and how it works?</p> <p>Don't understand how to use the heating properly?</p> <p>Can't keep track of bills/how much we use? Don't understand the bills?</p> <p>Don't know when the cheap times start and end? (PROBE FOR DETAILS)</p> <p>Supplier makes errors in meter readings? Problems with the actual meter?</p> <p>Disputes over bills?</p> <p>Unable to switch supplier? (FOLLOW UP IN SECTION 5 BELOW)</p> <p>Summarise main issue</p> <p>INTERVIEWER – MAKE SURE YOU ARE CLEAR WHETHER THE MAIN ISSUE IS WITH THE OFF PEAK TARIFF OR WITH THE HEATING SYSTEM (OR BOTH)</p> <p>So, can I just be sure what you are saying, the main problem is...</p> <p>Have you ever asked for help with understanding or using</p>	<p>Negatives about Off Peak Tariff</p>	<p>7 mins</p>

<p>your Off Peak rate and/ or your heating system? IF YES: What was the problem exactly? Who did you ask? What was the outcome?</p> <p>Would you recommend your OFF Peak rate to others? What sort of people or lifestyle would it suit best? PROBE EXPLANATIONS GIVEN</p>		
<p>5. Switching supplier</p> <p>Have you tried switching your supplier?</p> <p>IF NOT: why not? (THEN SKIP TO *Switching tariff BELOW)</p> <p>IF YES: Were you successful? Which suppliers did you deal with?</p> <p>How easy was it compare suppliers to see which was cheapest for you? Please explain how you went about deciding which supplier was best to switch to?</p> <p>Did your bill or annual statement have information that was useful in comparing prices?</p> <p>IF SWITCHED: Did you have any problems switching? Were you happy you switched, for example did you save money?</p> <p>IF NOT SWITCHED: Why did you not actually switch? Were there problems or restrictions to do with your Off Peak rate? PROBE FOR DETAILS</p> <p>*Switching tariff</p> <p>Have you ever tried to switch away from your Off Peak rate but staying with the same supplier? What was the outcome? PROBE FOR FULL DETAILS AND CONCLUSION</p>	<p>Explore switching supplier/tariff and the role of switching for people on Off Peak tariffs</p>	<p>3 mins</p>
<p>6. Wind up and information needs</p>		

<p>On the whole, if you were given the choice, would you continue with your Off Peak rate or would you prefer some other arrangement? IF OTHER: What other arrangement would you prefer? (PROBE DIFFERENT TARIFF/PAYMENT METHOD/HEATING SYSTEM etc)</p> <p>INTERVIEWER: AGAIN PLEASE BE CLEAR WHAT THEY WOULD MOST LIKE TO CHANGE – THEIR OFF PEAK TARIFF OR THEIR HEATING SYSTEM OR BOTH,</p> <p>Assuming you have to continue with your Off Peak rate and your current heating, is there any help or information you could be given that would improve things for you? For example that would help you save money, understand the system better etc?</p> <p>IF NOT MENTIONED GET COMMENT ON EACH:</p> <p>For example:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information on when it is cheaper to use electricity 2. Information on how to compare prices between suppliers 3. Information on how to switch supplier 4. Information on understanding your electricity bill and reading your meters 5. Information on how to use storage heaters and other appliances you use at off peak times <p>Is there any other kind of help, information or advice you ideally need? Who would you prefer this to come from?</p> <p>THANK AND CLOSE HAND OVER INCENTIVE</p> <p>INTERVIEWER: IF RESPONDENT HAS REAL ISSUE THEY WOULD LIKE HELP WITH PLEASE ADVISE THEM TO CALL THEIR SUPPLIER FIRST AND IF THAT DOES NOT HELP TO CALL CONSUMER DIRECT ON 0845 404 0506.</p> <p>INTERVIEWER: TAKE PHOTO OF OUTSIDE OF RESIDENCE WITH RESPONDENT PERMISSION (SHOW WHOLE BUILDING)</p>	<p>Summarise attitude to Off Peak tariffs and need for information or help</p>	<p>3 Mins</p>
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