# Health risks rise as households cut heating to save on energy bills



Recent data indicates significant health implications as one in three individuals report adverse effects on their physical well-being due to reduced heating in homes to save on rising energy bills. A survey conducted by Cadent, the UK’s largest gas network, involving 2,000 participants across the country, reveals that 31 percent of respondents feel their health has deteriorated as a consequence of efforts to economise on heating. The energy price cap was recently raised by 6.4 percent, translating to an increased annual bill of £111, amounting to £1,849 for households utilising a typical amount of gas and electricity.

The survey highlights the difficult choices many households are making as 44 percent report feeling more financially vulnerable this winter than in the previous year. Experts warn that living in cold conditions can exacerbate health risks, particularly among vulnerable populations. Carl Heneghan, an urgent care GP and Professor of Evidence-Based Medicine at Oxford University, noted, “It is well known that at temperatures below 18 degrees Celsius, people are more at risk of health problems such as heart attacks, exacerbated asthma or lung conditions and respiratory infections.” Heneghan emphasised the need for a connected policy that would safeguard public health amidst rising living costs, particularly as the population ages.

In response to the pressing situation, a spokesperson from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero stated, “Everyone deserves to live in a warm, comfortable home,” outlining proposals aimed at assisting nearly three million households, including one million with children, with their energy expenses next winter. The government’s Warm Homes Plan intends to enhance energy efficiency through improvements such as insulation, solar and heat pumps, with the goal of lifting up to half a million households out of fuel poverty by 2030.

The recent findings come alongside a report attributing much of the increase in energy bills to renewable energy subsidies and Net Zero policies. Since 2015, the electrical price cap has surged from £664 to £994, representing a 50 percent hike over the past decade. Professor Gordon Hughes from Edinburgh University stated that these subsidies, which constitute 40 percent of the bill increase, amount to £223 annually for consumers. These costs are associated with supporting solar and wind industries and maintaining backup energy systems to account for the variability of renewable energy sources.

Hughes contested the government’s narrative linking high energy costs solely to global gas price fluctuations. He remarked, “The largest contribution to the increase in inflation-adjusted bills over the decade is due to the increase in renewable subsidies and other policy costs.” Furthermore, he pointed out that British households face significantly higher energy costs compared to counterparts in other nations, paying nearly 2.5 times more than those in the US Midwest and almost five times the price of electricity in China.

Andrew Montford, Chief Executive of Net Zero Watch, described the UK government’s Net Zero strategy as a profound risk, arguing that the shift from established energy sources to unproven technologies imposes an undue fiscal burden on households. The government, however, refuted these claims, insisting that rising bills are a byproduct of global gas market vulnerabilities. They maintain that significant investment in clean, secure energy is critical for reducing costs sustainably in the long term.

Amidst this backdrop of financial strain and health concerns, the data and expert insights underscore the complex interplay of energy policy, economic pressures, and public health in the UK today.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/energy-price-cap-to-rise-by-64> - This URL supports the claim about the recent increase in the energy price cap by 6.4 percent, leading to higher annual bills for households.
* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-64455134> - This URL provides context on the impact of rising energy costs and the role of renewable energy subsidies in the UK.
* <https://www.ox.ac.uk/news/science-blog/health-risks-cold-homes> - This URL corroborates the health risks associated with living in cold conditions, as highlighted by Carl Heneghan.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-announces-new-measures-to-help-households-with-energy-bills> - This URL supports the government's initiatives to assist households with energy expenses, including the Warm Homes Plan.
* <https://www.ed.ac.uk/news/2023/renewable-energy-subsidies> - This URL provides insights into the impact of renewable energy subsidies on energy bills, as discussed by Professor Gordon Hughes.