



The 2026 Energy Squeeze

REPORT



HomeStars

Introduction

As the cost-of-living crisis continues, more Canadians than ever are struggling to make ends meet. As the temperature drops, the pressure is on to keep homes warm without breaking the bank, as energy costs continue to rise.

**33%**

say they are uncomfortably cold at home in winter

The new Energy Squeeze Report from HomeStars illustrates the problem: **one-third (33%) of Canadians say they feel uncomfortably cold in their homes over the winter.**

Based on a survey of 1,000 Canadians, the report reveals how households are struggling to cope with spiralling costs, the sacrifices they are making to cope, and the barriers to home upgrades that could make a difference.



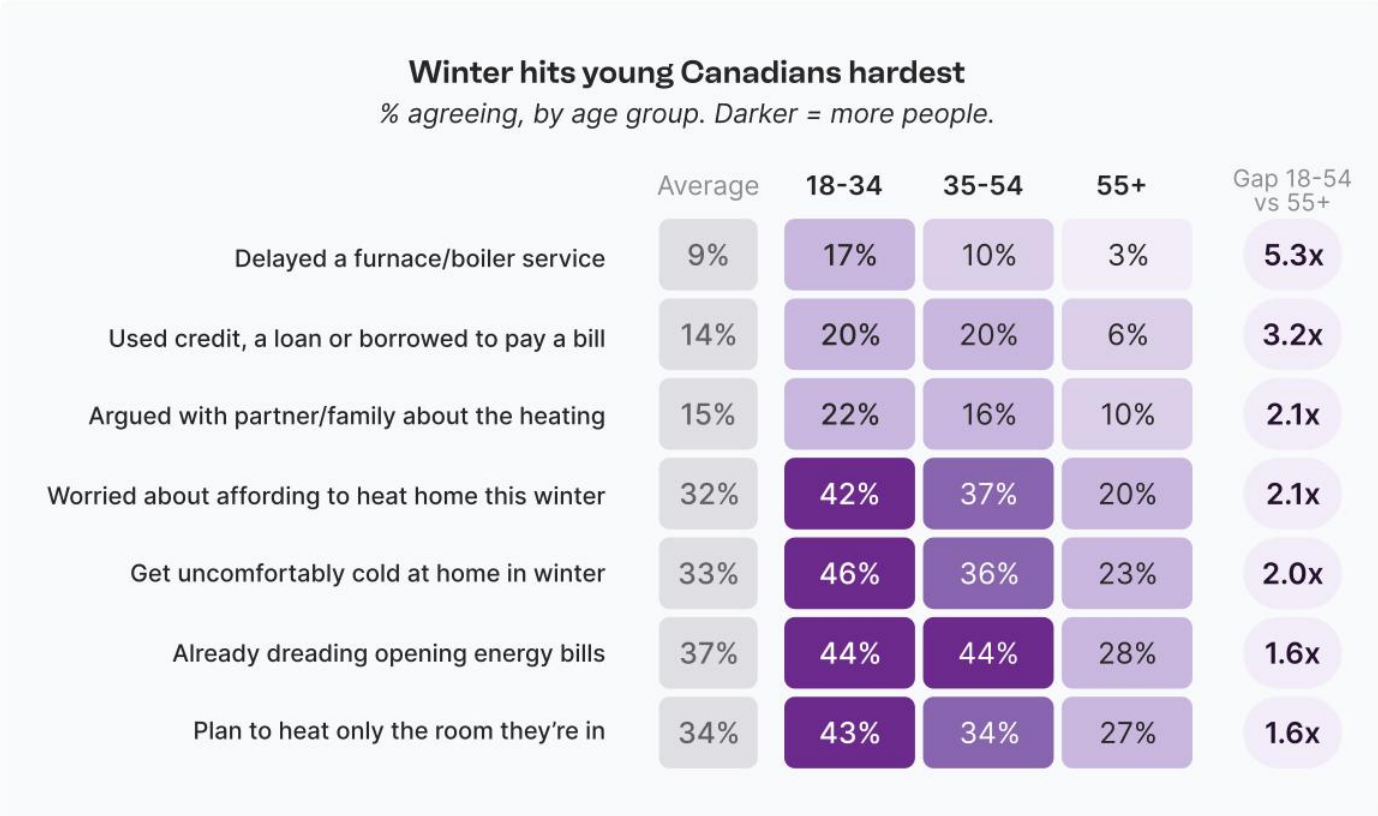
Bracing for an expensive winter

The cost-of-living crisis continues to simmer across Canada, and now energy prices are touted to increase. For an already stretched nation, this energy squeeze is significantly contributing to financial pressures, leading to intensifying strain on Canadian households.

The report shows that 62% of respondents admit to worrying about money and finances more than ever before, with **61% specifically concerned about the running cost of their homes.**

Those with children under 18 living at home were hit the hardest: **72% said they worry about running costs, 51% dread opening their bills, and 46% worry about affording heat.**

Age wise, respondents aged 35-54 appeared the most concerned over their finances, **with 71% admitting to worrying more about money** than ever before. Those in the 18-34 age category were somewhat less concerned, at 63%. This was still elevated compared to the over 55s, where 55% said they were worried.

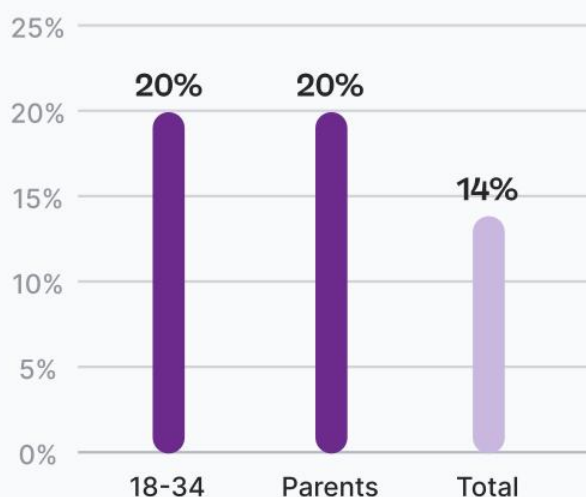




The impact has become so severe that **37% of Canadians are dreading opening their energy bills** — and **32% are worried about how they will afford to heat their homes** this winter. The psychological impact doesn't end there — **15% of respondents say they argued about when to turn the heating on.**

Already, **14% of respondents have turned to credit or borrowed from family or friends to pay an energy bill** — a figure that is only likely to rise as the costs increase as the nights draw in and the temperature drops. This concerning figure **rises to 20% among the 18-34 age category.** Among parents, 20% reported using a loan or credit card to pay for their energy bills. Renters are also affected more in this way: 18% have turned to credit for a bill.

Used a loan or credit card to pay an energy bill



Behavioural change: Cutting corners to cut costs

These rising concerns are leading to behavioural change across the nation, **with nearly three-quarters (73%) admitting to watching how much electricity they are using, while more than half (59%) are monitoring their gas usage** for heating and cooking.

This caution is motivating millions of Canadians to change their habits to conserve energy supplies. **Around one in five (21%) stated that they are taking shorter showers**, while **over a third (34%) admit that they plan to only heat the room they are in** over the winter, as opposed to their whole homes.

While some of these changes are merely inconvenient, others may represent a more serious problem. Concerningly, the research showed that millions of Canadians are choosing to skip home maintenance to accommodate the impending higher energy costs.

4 ways homeowners are cutting corners

**34%**

Planning to heat only the room they're in

**24%**

Cutting back on essential home maintenance

**21%**

Taking shorter showers

**9%**

Delay annual furnace check

Nearly a quarter (24%) of respondents said they had cut back on essential home maintenance due to rising energy costs, **22% have put off an important home maintenance task for 12 months or more**, while **9% admit they will delay getting their furnace serviced**.

This strategy has the potential to cause serious damage to Canadian homes across the country, and in some cases may pose a significant danger. Skipping a furnace service can lead to less effective heating, or even dangerous fumes coming into the home.

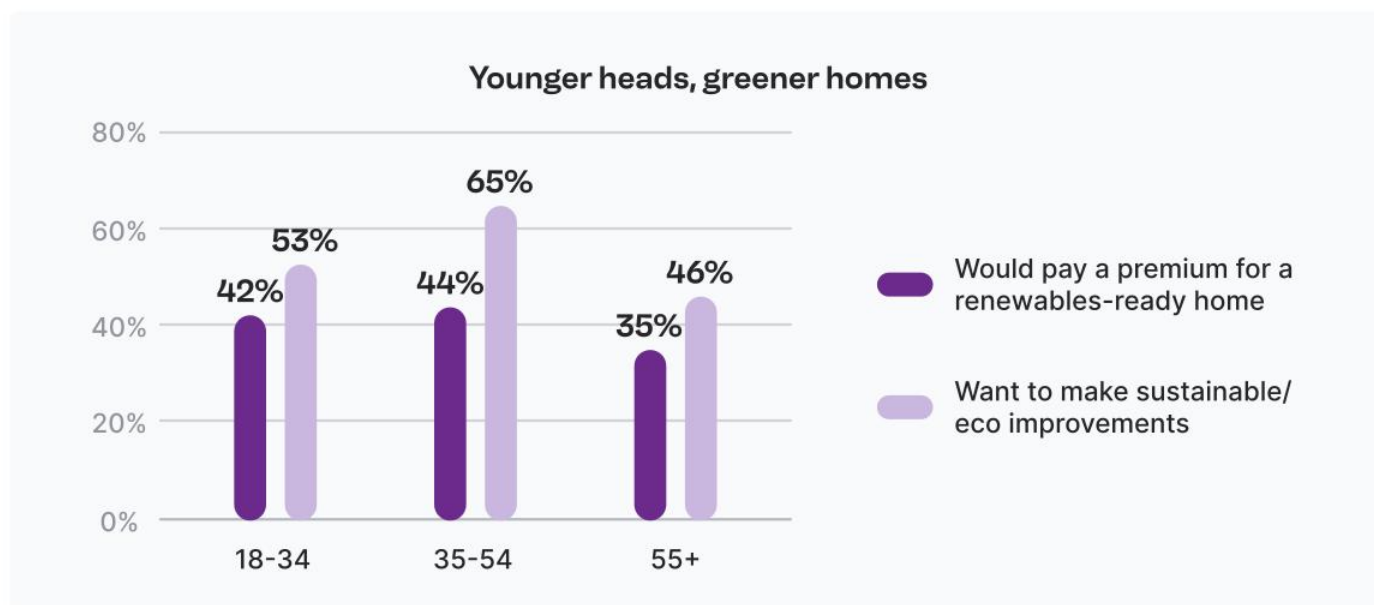
The eco ask: Homeowners' appetite for sustainable change

As millions of Canadians contemplate the continuing pressures of hiked energy costs, the subject of installing more sustainable solutions is front and centre.

The research showed that the majority of Canadians have the desire to make greener upgrades to their homes. In fact, **53% of homeowners said that they would like to make sustainable and environmentally friendly improvements** to their property. Those **respondents aged 35-54 appeared particularly keen to make upgrades, with 65% stating that they would like to make improvements**. This likely means that demand for sustainable upgrades will grow in the coming years.

Both Ontario residents and parents of children under-18 were also more eager than average to make sustainable changes, at 56% and 65% respectively.

Sustainability is also becoming a huge draw when buyers come to the property market, **with 40% stating that they would pay a premium for a home that already has renewable energy sources**. A previous International Homeowners' study by HomeStars showed that Canada is lagging behind other countries with green updates: Canada ranks last in solar panel adoption at just 5% — well behind the Netherlands (54%), Germany (32%), and even the US (15%) — (Source: *The International Homeowners Study*).



Warm, but not worried: the path to affordable heating

Soaring energy costs have the nation thinking about sustainable solutions that will make a meaningful difference to their bills — but the numbers show that most Canadians feel out of control and don't have the knowledge they need to make the upgrades.

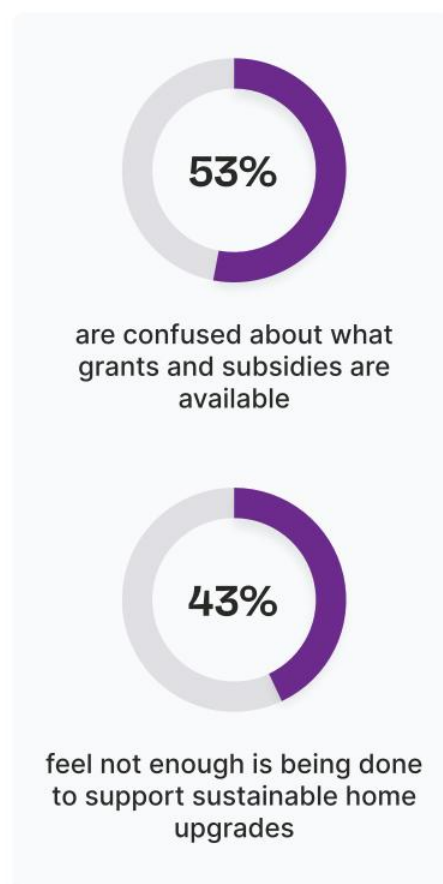
Almost half of homeowners surveyed admitted that their motivation for sustainable upgrades was primarily financial rather than environmental. However, the statistics showed that **more than half (53%) of respondents were confused about what grants and subsidies were available to install sustainable upgrades.**

Despite this, there is a definite appetite to make changes. The report showed that 15% are now considering installing solar panels, and 13% plan to install a home electric vehicle (EV) charger. It's potentially a good time for a sustainability push, because while **61% of Canadians are more worried about the running cost of their home than ever before, 66% of homeowners stated that they would rather renovate their home than move to another.**

Those aged 35-54 appeared especially worried about running their home, at 70%. On a similar scale, both renters and parents of children under 18 were worried about home running costs, at 67% and 72% respectively.

There are many meaningful sustainable home updates available, which could be encouraged by guidance and support from the government. The report shows that, currently, **43% of Canadians feel that not enough is being done by the government to financially support homeowners who want to make their property more environmentally sustainable and energy efficient.**

Improved support and better education will be key to removing barriers to meaningful change. Currently, there is a clear lack of understanding around subsidies and funding, but also what upgrades can actually offer.



Methodology

Survey data cited in this report is drawn from independent research conducted by Opinium on behalf of HomeStars, among a nationally representative sample of 1,000 UK adults aged 18 and over, fielded between 3 and 8 September 2026. Of this sample, 536 respondents were homeowners; where a stat in this report is described as being about homeowners, it's based on this subset rather than the full sample.