



Energy Fairness:

A Nationally Representative Multi-Mode Survey

2026 Survey Results

Overview of Methodology

Consumer Reports fielded this nationally representative survey to learn more about Americans' knowledge of, experiences with, and attitudes toward electricity utilities and energy policy in the United States. The results are based on interviews conducted from April 27th – May 19th, 2026. This document includes the results for all questions on the survey.

The survey was administered by NORC at the University of Chicago through its AmeriSpeak® Panel to a nationally representative sample. Interviews were administered both online and by phone. In total NORC collected 2,003 interviews, 1,901 by web mode and 102 by phone mode, 1,924 in English and 79 in Spanish. Final data are weighted by age, gender, race/Hispanic ethnicity, housing tenure, telephone status, education, and Census Division to be proportionally representative of the US adult population.

Key demographic characteristics (after weighting is applied) of this sample are presented below:

52% female; median age of 47 years old; 58% white, non-Hispanic; 37% 4-year college graduates; and 63% have a household income of \$50,000 or more.

The margin of error for results based on the total sample is +/- 2.84 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Smaller subgroups will have larger error margins, and only those subgroups for which there are at least 100 unweighted cases are included.

TOPLINE RESULTS

The questions presented below were shown to respondents in this order unless otherwise noted. Where appropriate, question wording, response answer choices, or direction of scales were randomized or rotated and those instances are noted below.

Also shown, where available, are trends over time. Not every item was asked previously, and where minor revisions to the wording of an item or response choices were made, they are noted below. Note these changes may impact comparability of results.

Prepared by CR Survey Research Department, August 2026

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Survey Notes for Monthly Trends

November 2025 results are based on interviews conducted from November 6 - 17, 2025 with a nationally representative sample of 2,146 US adults.

March 2025 results are based on interviews conducted from March 6 - 17, 2025 with a nationally representative sample of 2,291 US adults.

ELECTRICITY COSTS

INTRO.

This survey is about electric utilities.

EN1. [RESPONDENTS WERE PROMPTED ONCE TO RESPOND IF THEY DID NOT DO SO INITIALLY.]

Have you lived in the same home for the past three years?	
If you have more than one home, please respond thinking of the one <u>where you spend the majority of your time</u> .	
	Total
	%
Yes	87
No	13
Base: All respondents	2,003

EN2. [RANDOMIZE RESPONSE OPTIONS, HOLDING "UNSURE" AT END. "UNSURE" WAS EXCLUSIVE.]

Which of the following types of energy do you use to heat your home?

Select all that apply.

	Total
	%
Electricity	67
Natural gas	45
Propane	6
Wood	6
Heating oil	5
Unsure	3
Base: All respondents	2,003

EN_INTRO.

The next several questions will be about your electricity costs.

EN3. [RANDOMIZE ORDER OF "EASY" AND "DIFFICULT" IN QUESTION STEM AND ROTATE RESPONSE SCALE TO MATCH. HOLD "NOT APPLICABLE; I ONLY LOOK AT THE TOTAL I OWE" AND "NOT APPLICABLE; I NEVER READ OR LOOK AT ENERGY BILLS" AT END IN THAT ORDER.]

When you read your electricity bills, how easy or difficult is it for you to understand how your total cost is calculated, including fees and usage rates?	
	Total
	%
Very easy	18
Somewhat easy	33
Somewhat difficult	23
Very difficult	8
Not applicable; I only look at the total I owe	10
Not applicable; I never read or look at energy bills	7
Base: All respondents	2,001
[Rebased to exclude people who said "Not applicable"]	
	Total
	%
Very easy	22
Somewhat easy	40
Somewhat difficult	28
Very difficult	9
Base: Respondents who look at more than the total on their energy bills	1,648

EN4. [SHOW IF RESPONDENT HAS LIVED IN THE SAME HOME FOR THE PAST THREE YEARS (EN1="YES"). RESPONDENTS WERE PROMPTED ONCE TO RESPOND IF THEY DID NOT DO SO INITIALLY.]

In the past three years, have your electricity bills gone up?	
	Total
	%
Yes	81
No	10
Unsure	9
Base: Respondents who have lived in the same home for at least three years	1,714

EN5. [SHOW IF ELECTRICITY BILLS HAVE GONE UP IN THE PAST THREE YEARS (EN4="YES"). ROTATE RESPONSE SCALE DIRECTION, HOLDING "UNSURE" AT END.]

You said your electricity bills have gone up in the past three years. About how much have they increased <u>overall</u> during that time?	
	Total
	%
50% or more	8
20% to 49%	40
Less than 20%	38
Unsure	14
Base: Respondents whose electricity bills have gone up in the past three years	1,401
[Rebased to be out of all Americans]	
	Total
	%
50% or more	6
20% to 49%	28
Less than 20%	26
Unsure	10
[Did not live in home for at least three years, no cost increase, or unsure if cost increased]	30
Base: All respondents	2,003

EN6. [SHOW IF ELECTRICITY BILLS HAVE GONE UP IN THE PAST THREE YEARS (EN4="YES"). ROTATE RESPONSE SCALE DIRECTION, HOLDING "UNSURE" AT END.]

To what extent, if at all, has the increase in your electricity bills strained your household's finances?	
	Total
	%
Did not strain at all	25
Strained a little	50
Strained a lot	23
Unsure	2
Base: Respondents whose electricity bills have gone up in the past three years	1,398
[Rebased to be out of all Americans]	
	Total
	%
Did not strain at all	18
Strained a little	35
Strained a lot	16
Unsure	1
[Did not live in home for at least three years, no cost increase, or unsure if cost increased]	30
Base: All respondents	2,003

EN7. [RANDOMIZE RESPONSE OPTIONS, KEEPING "DELAYED OR SKIPPED PAYING RENT OR A MORTGAGE," "DELAYED OR SKIPPED PAYING A CREDIT CARD BILL, CAR LOAN, STUDENT LOAN, OR OTHER LOAN," AND "DELAYED OR SKIPPED PAYING ANOTHER BILL, SUCH AS PHONE, CABLE, MEDICAL BILL, ETC." TOGETHER WITH THE FIRST TWO IN RANDOM ORDER AND "ANOTHER BILL" COMING LAST, AND HOLDING "OTHER," "NOT APPLICABLE; I HAVE NEVER HAD TO MAKE ANY TRADEOFFS OR GET HELP TO PAY AN ELECTRICITY BILL," AND "DON'T RECALL" AT END IN THAT ORDER. "NOT APPLICABLE" AND "DON'T RECALL" WERE EXCLUSIVE.]

Sometimes, households may make tradeoffs or get help in order to pay their electricity bills.

In the past two years, which, if any, of the following have you done or looked into to help pay an electricity bill?

Select all that apply.

Just a reminder that NORC has strong protections in place to protect your privacy, but you don't have to answer if this feels too sensitive.

	Total
	%
Cut back on non-essential spending, such as travel, eating out, or streaming services	27
Reduced heating or cooling to uncomfortable levels to save money	26
Cut back on groceries or switched to less expensive food options	19
Looked up whether the utility company had programs to lower my costs, such as rebates,	18
Delayed or skipped paying another bill, such as phone, cable, medical bill, etc.	9
Applied for government assistance, such as SNAP or HEAP	9
Borrowed money from a friend or family member	9
Looked up whether I could get financial help from a community organization	8
Delayed or skipped paying a credit card bill, car loan, student loan, or other loan	7
Delayed or skipped paying rent or a mortgage	3
Other, please specify	2
Not applicable; I have never had to make any tradeoffs or get help to pay an electricity bill	39
Don't recall	5
Base: All respondents	2,003

EN8. [RANDOMIZE RESPONSE OPTIONS, KEEPING THE TWO "UTILITY COMPANIES' INVESTMENTS IN . . ." ITEMS TOGETHER IN RANDOM ORDER AND HOLDING "OTHER" AND "UNSURE" AT END IN THAT ORDER. "UNSURE" WAS EXCLUSIVE.]

Here are some theories people have about what affects home electricity costs, besides normal inflation.

Which, if any, of them do you think affect what you pay for your electricity at home?

Select all that apply.

	Energy Fairness 2026	November 2025 AES
	Total	Total
	%	%
Utility companies' profits	45	49
Increased energy demand from data centers and artificial intelligence systems	38	37
Frequent changes in the prices of fossil fuels like coal or natural gas	37	34
Costs to make standard updates and repairs to energy systems and infrastructure, such as power plants and transmission lines	36	38
Costs from extreme weather and wildfires	33	33
International factors like trade policies, sanctions, and military conflicts	28	26
Policies that make it more difficult to build new energy infrastructure, such as new power plants and transmission lines	24	29
Utility companies' investments in renewable energy sources, like wind or solar power	23	23
Utility companies' investments in power plants running on fuels like nuclear, coal, or natural gas	21	20
Programs funded by utilities that help people pay their bills or improve home efficiency	15	-
Other, please specify	2	4
Unsure	19	14
Base: All respondents	2,003	2,146

Note: In the November 2025 survey, the question stem said "energy" instead of "electricity." The 2025 survey included the response option "Increased energy demand from electric vehicle drivers," selected by only 19% and dropped in favor of "Programs funded by utilities that help people pay their bills or improve home efficiency." In addition, the following wording changes were made:

- "Costs to upgrade or repair energy systems and infrastructure" became "Costs to make standard updates and repairs to energy systems and infrastructure, such as power plants and transmission lines"
- "Policies that make it more difficult to build new energy infrastructure" became "Policies that make it more difficult to build new energy infrastructure, such as new power plants and transmission lines"
- "International trade policies and sanctions" became "International factors like trade policies, sanctions, and military conflicts"

EN9. [ROTATE RESPONSE SCALE DIRECTION, HOLDING "UNSURE" AT END.]

State government regulators (often called public utility commissions) review and approve the prices electricity companies charge customers, as well as major investments in the electricity system. These regulators are supposed to balance the needs of different types of customers, like homes, businesses, and factories.

How much, if at all, do you trust your regulators to protect the interests of people like you?

	Total
	%
Trust completely	1
Trust a lot	6
Trust a little	44
Do not trust at all	34
Unsure	15
Base: All respondents	1,998

ROLE OF ENERGY EFFICIENCY

EFF_INTRO.

The next few questions are about how people and companies use electricity.

EFF1. [RANDOMIZE RESPONSE OPTIONS, HOLDING "UNSURE" AT END.]

When electricity demand increases, utilities have two main options. They can produce more electricity, such as by building new power plants or solar farms, or they can help customers like homes and businesses use less electricity, such as by helping them pay for upgrades like better insulation and more efficient appliances.

Which kind of projects should the utility companies focus on first?

	Total
	%
Utilities should prioritize <u>helping their customers improve energy efficiency</u> first	55
Utilities should prioritize <u>producing more energy</u> first	27
Unsure	18
Base: All respondents	1,997

EFF2. [RANDOMIZE ORDER OF "AGREE" AND "DISAGREE" IN QUESTION STEM AND ROTATE RESPONSE SCALE TO MATCH.]

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

"New home appliances for sale in the US should be required to achieve at least a minimum level of energy efficiency."

By "home appliances," we mean both large appliances, like a refrigerator or washign machine, and small appliances, like toasters, vacuum cleaners, and coffee makers.

	Energy Fairness 2026	March 2025 AES
	Total	Total
	%	%
Strongly agree	47	47
Somewhat agree	41	40
Somewhat disagree	8	9
Strongly disagree	3	4
Base: All respondents	1,986	2,273

DEMAND RESPONSE PROGRAMS

DR1. [RESPONDENTS WERE PROMPTED ONCE TO RESPOND IF THEY DID NOT DO SO INITIALLY. ROTATE RESPONSE SCALE DIRECTION.]

Some electricity utilities offer optional programs where customers reduce electricity use during times of very high demand. In some cases, utilities can briefly adjust connected devices like smart thermostats, water heaters, or EV chargers. In return, participants may receive bill credits, rebates, or lower rates.

Which statement is most true for you?

	Total
	%
I have never heard of this	32
I have heard of this, but I don't know if my electricity utility offers it	26
I have heard of this, but my electricity utility does not offer it	11
I know my electricity utility offers it, but I don't want to use it	12
I know my electricity utility offers it, and I am considering signing up	7
My household already participates in a program like this	12
Base: All respondents	1,999

DR2. [SHOW IF RESPONDENT DOES NOT CURRENTLY PARTICIPATE IN A DEMAND RESPONSE PROGRAM (DR1 IS NOT "MY HOUSEHOLD ALREADY PARTICIPATES IN A PROGRAM LIKE THIS"). RANDOMIZE RESPONSE OPTIONS, HOLDING "I RENT MY HOME OR CANNOT MAKE THESE KINDS OF CHANGES TO IT" AT THE BEGINNING; KEEPING "HASSLE OF SIGNING UP FOR THE PROGRAM," "HASSLE OF GETTING EQUIPMENT NEEDED TO PARTICIPATE, SUCH AS A SMART THERMOSTAT," AND "COST OF EQUIPMENT NECESSARY TO PARTICIPATE, SUCH AS A SMART THERMOSTAT" TOGETHER WHERE HASSLE OF SIGNING UP AND COST ARE RANDOMIZED AROUND HASSLE OF GETTING EQUIPMENT; KEEPING "DO NOT WANT THE UTILITY COMPANY ADJUSTING MY THERMOSTAT OR APPLIANCES," "DO NOT TRUST THE UTILITY COMPANY TO USE THE PROGRAM FAIRLY," AND "PRIVACY CONCERNS ABOUT HOW MY ENERGY USAGE DATA MIGHT BE COLLECTED OR USED" TOGETHER IN RANDOM ORDER; AND HOLDING "JUST DON'T KNOW ENOUGH ABOUT HOW THESE PROGRAMS WORK," "OTHER," AND "NONE, I HAVE NO HESITATIONS" AT END IN THAT ORDER. "NONE" WAS EXCLUSIVE.]

Programs like the one described in the previous question are called "demand response" programs.

Which, if any, of the following might prevent you from using a demand response program if one were available from your utility company?

Select all that apply.

	Total
	%
Do not want the utility company adjusting my thermostat or appliances	35
Concern that the program would not actually save me much money	31
Concern that it would affect my comfort, such as being too hot in summer or too cold in winter	29
<u>Cost</u> of equipment necessary to participate, such as a smart thermostat	25
Do not trust the utility company to use the program fairly	24
<u>Hassle of getting equipment</u> needed to participate, such as a smart thermostat	22
I rent my home or cannot make these kinds of changes to it	21
Privacy concerns about how my energy usage data might be collected or used	20
Hassle of <u>signing up</u> for the program	13
Just don't know enough about how these programs work	27
Other, please specify	1
None, I have no hesitations about using a demand-response program	10
Base: Respondents who do not currently use a demand response program	1,751

DR3. [SHOW IF RESPONDENT DOES NOT CURRENTLY PARTICIPATE IN A DEMAND RESPONSE PROGRAM (DR1 IS NOT "MY HOUSEHOLD ALREADY PARTICIPATES IN A PROGRAM LIKE THIS"). RESPONDENTS COULD SELECT UP TO THREE RESPONSES. RANDOMIZE RESPONSE OPTIONS, HOLDING "OTHER" AND "NOTHING, I WOULD NEVER USE A DEMAND RESPONSE PROGRAM" AT END IN THAT ORDER. "NOTHING" WAS EXCLUSIVE.]

Which, if any, of the following would <u>most</u> encourage you to use a demand response program if one were available from your utility company?	
Select <u>up to three</u> .	
	Total
	%
Meaningful savings on my electric bill	53
The ability to easily opt out of the program at any time	35
The ability to easily override changes the utility makes in my home	28
Free or discounted smart devices, such as smart thermostats	28
Assurance that my home temperature would stay comfortable even if the utility adjusted my	25
A sign-up bonus or other upfront financial incentive	23
Strong privacy protections for my energy usage data	12
Other, please specify	1
Nothing, I would never use a demand response program	15
Base: Respondents who do not currently use a demand response program	1,751

PROFITS, ALLOWABLE COST RECOVERY, AND WEATHER RESILIENCE/NATURAL DISASTERS

PROFIT_INTRO.

The next few questions are about utility companies' business practices.

PROFIT1. [RANDOMIZE RESPONSE OPTIONS, HOLDING "ALL OF THESE ARE UNACCEPTABLE" AND "NONE OF THESE ARE UNACCEPTABLE" AT END IN THAT ORDER. EACH WAS EXCLUSIVE.]

Energy utilities may have a range of business expenses in addition to the direct costs of producing and delivering electricity. They can pass these expenses on to customers by increasing energy rates or they can pay them out of company profits.

In your opinion, which, if any of these expenses are not acceptable for utility companies to pay for by passing them on to customers?

Select all that apply.

	Total
	%
Donations to political campaigns	28
Political lobbying	27
Salaries for executives beyond \$500,000 per year	26
Fines or penalties for violating laws or regulations	23
Corporate travel, such as airfare for business travel or corporate jet ownership	19
Advertising expenses	14
Membership fees and other costs of belonging to trade associations	13
Charitable donations	13
Involvement in local communities, such as sponsoring highway cleanup or youth sports	7
<u>All</u> of these are unacceptable; I do not think energy utilities should charge customers for	47
<u>None</u> of these are unacceptable	8
Base: All respondents	2,003

DISASTER.

The next question focuses on the infrastructure of utility companies--such as power lines, plants, and substations--built to prepare for or recover from natural disasters.

WD1. [ROTATE RESPONSE SCALE DIRECTION, HOLDING "UNSURE" AT END.]

Utility companies often spend money to protect their systems from disasters (like wildfires or storms) or to fix damage after they happen. They usually pay for these projects upfront and then gradually get that money back by raising customer rates.

When a utility company spends money this way, which of the following best describes how these costs should be handled, even if none is exactly right?

	Total
	%
No Profit: The company should only get back the exact amount they spent, with no extra profit added	30
Lower Profit: The company should make a small profit, but it should be less than what they usually make on other projects, like building new power plants	20
Standard Profit: The company should make the same amount of profit they usually make on any other major investment, like building a new power plant	24
Higher Profit: The company should make a higher-than-usual profit because these disaster-related projects are especially important or risky	3
Unsure	23
Base: All respondents	1,985

DATA CENTERS

DC_INFO.

Data centers, especially those used for artificial intelligence (AI), can drive up electricity prices. They use a lot of electricity, which increases overall demand. It can also be expensive for utilities to build new infrastructure to serve data centers, and those costs may be passed on to customers through higher rates.

DC1. [ROTATE RESPONSE SCALE DIRECTION, HOLDING "UNSURE" AT END.]

If a data center closes, utilities may still have to pay for infrastructure, such as power plants and transmission lines, built to serve it. In some cases, they can recover those costs by raising rates for their remaining customers.

Which approach would you support in this situation?

	Total
	%
The <u>data center</u> should be required to cover the full cost, even if it closes, so rates do not change for the remaining customers	46
The <u>utility company</u> should absorb any costs it cannot recover from the data center developer, so rates do not change for customers	23
Utilities should only be allowed to raise rates for remaining <u>industrial customers</u> , such as factories or other data centers, to recover those costs	11
Utilities should be allowed to raise rates for <u>all</u> remaining customers to recover those costs	2
Unsure	18
Base: All respondents	1,994

DC2. [ROTATE RESPONSE SCALE DIRECTION.]

Similarly, utilities may build power plants or lines because they expect new data centers will be built in their area, even if no data centers have made plans yet. This means that money is spent before those data centers begin using or paying for the power, and they might not ever do so.

Which of the following comes closest to your opinion on how utilities should recover the costs of building that infrastructure, even if none is exactly right?

	Total
	%
Pay for the construction costs out of their own funds and only recover them if or when the data center comes online and starts paying	69
Raise rates on <u>other industrial customers</u> , such as factories and other data centers, but lower them again if or when the data center comes online and starts paying	21
Raise rates on <u>all kinds</u> of customers, but lower them again if or when the data center comes online and starts paying	6
[No response]	4
Base: All respondents	2,003

DC3. [RANDOMIZE ORDER OF "SUPPORT" AND "OPPOSE" IN QUESTION STEM AND ROTATE RESPONSE SCALE DIRECTION TO MATCH.]

Electricity utilities typically charge different rates for different types of customers, such as households, businesses, and factories.

Some have proposed putting large electricity users, such as data centers, in a separate category so that only those customers pay for the costs of serving them specifically.

Would you support or oppose your local utility company creating a separate rate category for large electricity users like data centers?

	Total
	%
Strongly support	48
Somewhat support	36
Somewhat oppose	10
Strongly oppose	5
Base: All respondents	1,969

DC4. [ROTATE RESPONSE SCALE DIRECTION.]

New electricity infrastructure is often built to support data centers. Utilities typically pay for this infrastructure by raising electricity rates for at least some types of customers. While it is mainly built for the data centers, other customers may benefit from it as well.

With that in mind, what best describes how you think costs for building this infrastructure should be shared, even if none is exactly right?

	Total
	%
Data centers should <u>pay all</u> of the costs, since they are the main reason the infrastructure is built	50
Data centers should <u>pay more</u> than other customers, but all customers should pay at least a little, since they all benefit	39
Costs should be <u>shared evenly</u> across all customers, since all customers benefit from a stronger electric system	9
[No response]	2
Base: All respondents	2,003

ENERGY SOLUTIONS

MIX_INTRO.

The last few questions are about different ways of generating electricity.

MIX1. [ROTATE RESPONSE SCALE DIRECTION FOR THE CORE SCALE ITEMS, ALWAYS HOLDING "IT DOES NOT MATTER TO ME AS LONG AS ELECTRICITY IS RELIABLE AND AFFORDABLE" FIRST AND "UNSURE" LAST.]

Electricity in the United States is generated from a mix of sources. Some are renewable, such as wind, solar, and geothermal. Others are not renewable, such as coal, oil, and natural gas.

Which of the following best reflects your view of what types of electricity sources the US should prioritize building more of in the next few years?

	Total
	%
It does not matter to me as long as electricity is reliable and affordable	24
All or nearly all from renewable sources	18
Mostly from renewable sources	19
Roughly equal mix of renewable and non-renewable sources	13
Mostly from non-renewable sources	5
All or nearly all from non-renewable sources	4
Unsure	18
Base: All respondents	1,989

MIX2. [RESPONDENTS WERE PROMPTED ONCE TO RESPOND IF THEY DID NOT DO SO INITIALLY. RANDOMIZE GRID ITEMS, HOLDING "GRID-SCALE ENERGY STORAGE TO BETTER USE EXISTING POWER" AT END. ROTATE RESPONSE SCALE DIRECTION, HOLDING "UNSURE; I DON'T KNOW ENOUGH ABOUT IT TO SAY" AT END.]

Electricity demand in the US is growing and production needs to increase to meet it.	
For each of the following, please indicate if you would <u>support</u> or oppose building these in <u>your state</u>.	
	Total
Solar panel farms	
	%
Net support	72
Strongly support	44
Somewhat support	27
Somewhat oppose	8
Strongly oppose	8
Unsure; I don't know enough about it to say	13
Base: All respondents	1,997
Hydroelectric power plants	
	%
Net support	66
Strongly support	35
Somewhat support	31
Somewhat oppose	6
Strongly oppose	3
Unsure; I don't know enough about it to say	25
Base: All respondents	1,994
Wind turbine farms	
	%
Net support	65
Strongly support	38
Somewhat support	27
Somewhat oppose	9
Strongly oppose	11
Unsure; I don't know enough about it to say	15
Base: All respondents	1,997
Grid-scale energy storage to better use existing power	
	%
Net support	61
Strongly support	29
Somewhat support	32
Somewhat oppose	5
Strongly oppose	3
Unsure; I don't know enough about it to say	31
Base: All respondents	1,996

MIX2. [CONTINUED.]

Natural gas power plants	
	%
Net support	59
Strongly support	22
Somewhat support	37
Somewhat oppose	14
Strongly oppose	6
Unsure; I don't know enough about it to say	21
Base: All respondents	1,998
Geothermal power plants	
	%
Net support	55
Strongly support	27
Somewhat support	28
Somewhat oppose	8
Strongly oppose	4
Unsure; I don't know enough about it to say	34
Base: All respondents	1,994
Nuclear power plants	
	%
Net support	45
Strongly support	21
Somewhat support	24
Somewhat oppose	16
Strongly oppose	18
Unsure; I don't know enough about it to say	21
Base: All respondents	1,999
Coal power plants	
	%
Net support	32
Strongly support	10
Somewhat support	22
Somewhat oppose	18
Strongly oppose	29
Unsure; I don't know enough about it to say	21
Base: All respondents	1,996

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