

EXCLUSIVE

Heat or Eat: Two thirds of Victorians sacrificing groceries, heating or cooling due to energy cost pressure

Victorians have been forced to choose between heating their homes and putting food on the table as energy costs pile pressure on household budgets.



Oscar Godsell Political Reporter
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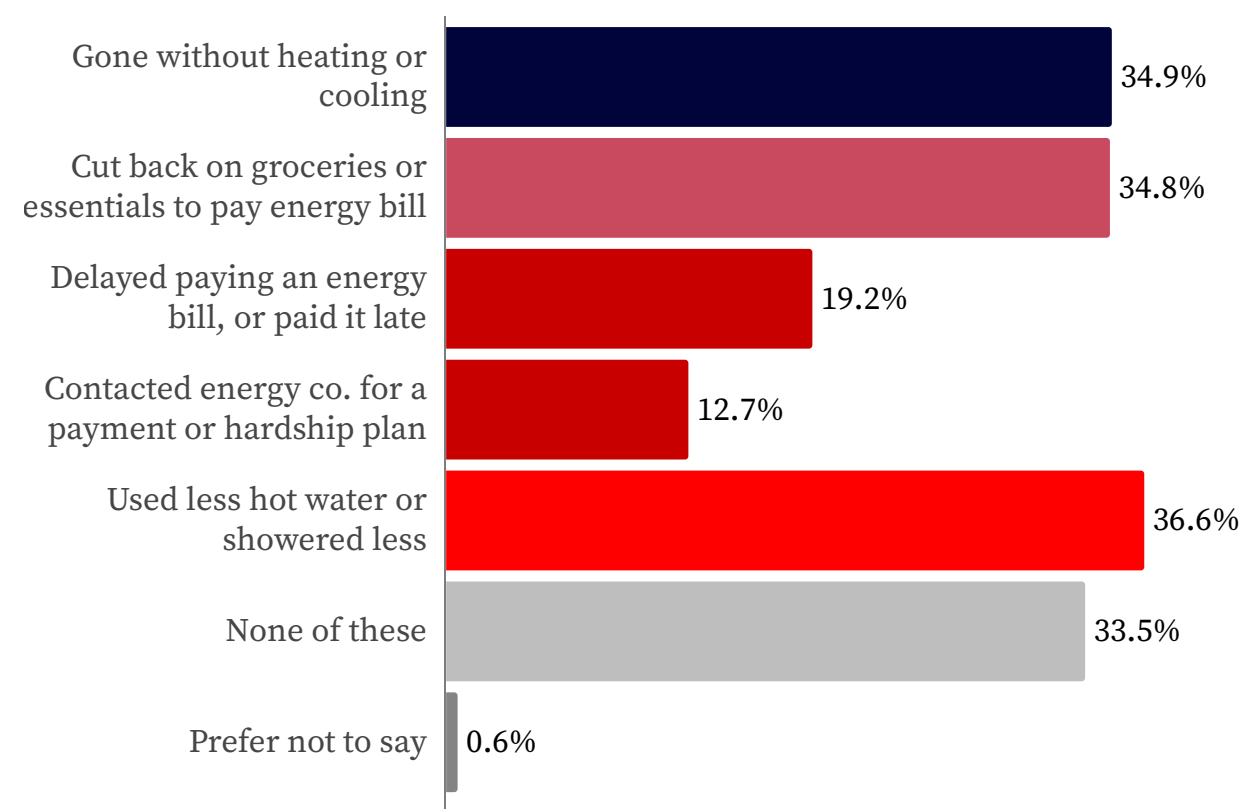
Almost two-thirds of Victorians have been forced to make sacrifices because of energy costs, according to new polling provided to News24.com.au.

The Compass Polling survey, commissioned by [Affordable Energy Australia](#), found 65.8 per cent of Victorians took energy-cost hardship measures over the last 12 months.

These measures included things such as going without heating or cooling, and cutting back on groceries.

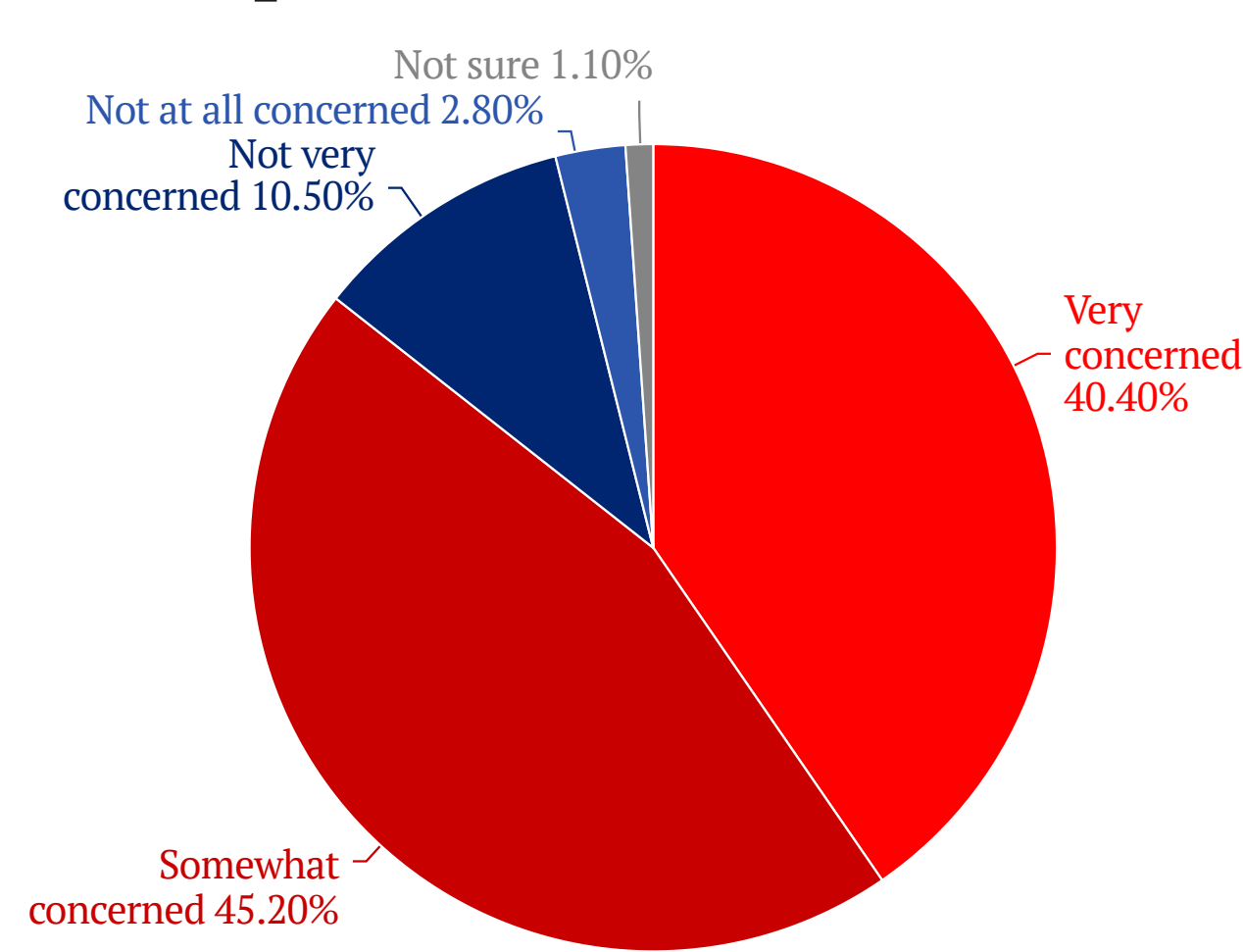
More than one in five – 22.5 per cent – said they had taken three or more hardship measures.

Victorians' sacrifices due to energy bills



Source: Compass Polling for Affordable Energy Australia
Question: In the past 12 months, have you done any of the following?

Eight in 10 Victorians concerned about power bills



Source: Compass Polling for Affordable Energy Australia
Question: How concerned are you, if at all, about the cost of your household electricity and gas bills?
1,018 Victorian residents aged 18 and over, fieldwork September 2026, job A-95992. Weighted to recalled 2022 Victorian state election vote.
Margin of error approximately +/-3.3 points.

Of the 1,018 people surveyed, 34.9 per cent had gone without heating or cooling due to energy costs, while 34.8 per cent cut back on groceries or other essentials.

Another 19.2 per cent had delayed an energy bill or paid it late, while 12.7 per cent had sought a payment plan or hardship assistance.

Affordable Energy Australia spokeswoman Zoe Hilton said the findings showed household energy costs had become a mainstream political concern.

“People are going without heating, cutting their grocery budgets and paying bills late because they cannot absorb higher energy costs,” she said.

“With more than a third of Victorians sacrificing heating or cooling and groceries just to pay their bills, governments cannot afford to keep kicking the can down the road.

“Affordability must be put at the centre of every energy decision.”



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Energy emerges as election issue

The findings land as energy policy becomes an increasingly prominent battleground ahead of Victoria’s state election.

Almost six in 10 respondents – 59.1 per cent – said a political party’s energy policy would influence their vote either “a great deal” or “a fair amount”.

“Households have heard repeated promises that the energy transition will lower their bills. But this has not been the reality experienced by Victorians,” Ms Hilton said.

“Almost six in ten Victorians say energy policy will influence their state vote. We call on every party to explain clearly how its plan will keep power affordable and reliable.”

The results come despite the Victorian government pointing to falls in regulated electricity prices this financial year.



The Victorian Default Offer for 2026-27 was expected to fall by an average of five per cent for households, or about \$84 a year, according to the state government.

Around 512,000 households were expected to directly receive the reduction from July 1, 2026.

The Default Offer acts as a regulated standing-offer price and reference point rather than representing the bill paid by every Victorian household.

The government has argued its renewable-energy and energy-efficiency policies are putting downward pressure on prices.

Energy Minister Jaclyn Symes told parliament this month the Victorian Energy Upgrades scheme had been used by more than 2.4 million households.

The government has also announced a Midday Power Saver scheme, under which about 2.6 million homes will be eligible for three hours free electricity at midday.

The government said the initiative could provide potential annual savings of up to \$300 for households and more for homes with solar and batteries.

But the new polling indicates substantial numbers of Victorians nevertheless report making sacrifices because of their energy costs.



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Energy transition under scrutiny

The political fight comes as Victoria pushes ahead with a major overhaul of its electricity system as ageing coal generators approach retirement.

The government is targeting 65 per cent renewable electricity generation by 2030 and 95 per cent by 2035, alongside at least 6.3GW of energy storage by 2035.

Ms Symes has defended the transition, telling parliament the government would replace retiring coal with renewables, storage and transmission lines.

Premier Ben Carroll has meanwhile ordered an independent cost assessment of the controversial Western Renewables Link.

“This project was planned almost 10 years ago and Victorian consumers deserve updated, transparent costings,” Mr Carroll said when announcing the assessment.

“If we can save money on the costs of building, we can help reduce the cost of living.”

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The Compass Polling survey covered 1,018 Victorian residents aged 18 and over and was representative of the state's adult population based on the 2021 Census.

The poll has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.3 percentage points at the 95 per cent confidence level.

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