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Survey: One-in-Four Americans Have Struggled to Pay Their Electric Bills

The first installment in the Smart Energy Snapshot Series highlights Americans' difficulties in paying their electric bills and how industry stakeholders can help

ATLANTA – June 28, 2023 – A quarter of all Americans – and 34 percent of those earning under \$50,000 per year – report having struggled to pay their electric bills over the past 12 months, according to a new survey from the [Smart Energy Consumer Collaborative](https://www.smartenergycc.org) (SECC), a nonprofit organization that studies Americans' energy-related behaviors, interests and values.

The “Alleviating Americans’ Energy Burdens” survey is the first installment in SECC’s Smart Energy Snapshot Series, a new consumer research series designed to quickly capture Americans’ thoughts on timely energy-related topics via brief, nationally representative surveys.

The survey – fielded to 1,524 Americans in late April – asked Americans whether they have struggled to pay their electric bills over the past year, if they have taken additional steps to pay and/or reduce their bills, whether they are aware of or are actively participating in utility programs and services designed to help with their energy expenses and more.

According to the survey’s findings, consumers who have struggled to pay their electric bills have resorted to many different actions to ensure services remain in good standing, including:

- 51 percent have cut expenses elsewhere in their households.
- 34 percent have found ways to make extra money.
- 32 percent have made a late payment.
- 25 percent have paid their bill via a credit card.

Many also report having taken steps to lower their household electricity consumption over the past year. Among those who have struggled to pay their bills, 53 percent have reduced heat or A/C usage, 46 percent have reduced appliance usage, and 41 percent have replaced light bulbs with energy-efficient LEDs.

However, despite Americans’ challenges paying their electric bills, relatively few have heard of programs or offers from their electricity providers that could help with their bills. Among those

who have struggled, only 12 percent have received an offer for an energy audit, and less than a quarter have heard about rebates/discounts for energy-efficient appliances (24 percent), offers to change their rate plans (22 percent) or rebates/discounts on HVAC upgrades (20 percent). Thirty-four percent say that they haven't seen any offers or heard about any programs, and this goes up to half (49 percent) of consumers earning under \$50,000 annually.

An infographic covering the highlights of the “Alleviating Americans’ Energy Burdens” survey can be [viewed here](#), and a slide deck with more in-depth findings is available exclusively for SECC’s membership [here](#). In addition, we will be hosting [a 30-minute webinar](#) on the new research findings and related energy affordability issues on Wednesday, July 26 at 1 p.m. (ET).

About the Smart Energy Consumer Collaborative (SECC)

The Smart Energy Consumer Collaborative (SECC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that works to learn the wants and needs of energy consumers in North America, encourages the collaborative sharing of best practices in consumer engagement among industry stakeholders, and educates the public about the benefits of smart energy and energy technology. To learn more, visit www.smartenergycc.org or follow our Company Page on [LinkedIn](#).