



Under embargo until: 00.01hrs Friday 2nd December, 2011

FUEL POVERTY IS A REGIONAL ISSUE – LEVEL IN WALES IS DOUBLE THAT OF LONDON

- **Almost a third of households suffer from fuel poverty in Wales (32%), but this drops to 16% in London^[1]**
- **While Wales suffers the highest level of fuel poverty, the east of England comes a close second with 31% of households classed as fuel poor^[1]**
- **Double whammy: as well as having the highest fuel poverty level, Wales also has some of the highest energy prices in the UK^[2]**
- **Household energy bills have rocketed by £633 or 96% in just over 5 years^[3] - in total 6.9 million or 27% of British households now gripped by fuel poverty^[4].**

Research from uSwitch.com, the independent price comparison and switching service, reveals stark differences in fuel poverty levels across the UK, with Wales and the east of England hit hardest of all.

Almost a third of households in Wales (32%) and the east of England (31%) are fuel poor^[1] while London was found to have the lowest level of fuel poverty in the UK with just 16% of households affected^[1]. However, with huge anomalies in how wealth is distributed across the capital, some parts of London could be experiencing far higher levels of fuel poverty than the findings suggest.

As well as being the fuel poor capital of the UK, Wales is also the victim of a postcode lottery on energy prices that sees local households paying more for their energy than most other parts of the UK. In Cardiff (Swalec region) the average household energy bill is £1,312 a year, compared with £1,280 in Edinburgh and Glasgow (ScottishPower region)^[2]. The average household energy bill across the UK is £1,293 a year^[3].

The research also doesn't take into account the most recent round of energy price hikes, which added £161 or 14% onto household energy bills^[3] and pushed an estimated 569,000 more

households into fuel poverty^[4]. In total, household energy bills have rocketed by £633 or 96% in just over 5 years^[3] and an estimated 6.9 million or 27% of households are now fuel poor^[4].

Figures from DECC suggest that 63% of households in fuel poverty are living in owner occupied accommodation while just 19% are in Local Authority or Registered Social Landlord housing^[5]. Because of higher modern Social Housing standards, the latter are more likely to have benefited from energy efficiency measures in their home, reducing the amount of energy used and therefore the cost.

Levels of fuel poverty by region^[1]:

Ranking	Region	% of households in fuel poverty	Average household energy bill
1	Wales	32%	£1,312 (Swalec)
2	East	31%	£1,283 (Eastern)
3	North	26%	£1,282 (Northern)
4	Scotland	25%	£1,280 (ScottishPower)
5	South	24%	£1,295 (Southern)
6	Midlands	22%	£ 1,293 (Midlands)
7	London	16%	£1,293 (London)

Source: uSwitch.com

Bill size based on a medium user customer using 3,300 kWh of electricity and 16,500 kWh of gas, on a standard plan paying on receipt of bill with bill sizes averaged across the big six suppliers in each PES region.

Ann Robinson, Director of Consumer Policy at uSwitch.com says: “Rocketing energy prices mean that no area of the UK is safe from the clutches of fuel poverty. The fuel poor can be found in all types of households and in all parts of the country, but some regions and households are clearly more vulnerable than others.

“There is now real urgency for the Government to deliver on fuel poverty and to act quickly to alleviate the misery being faced by those who cannot afford to heat their homes. But, in the meantime, households have to start protecting themselves and there are two key steps to this: pay the lowest possible price for your energy and learn to use less of it.

“Those who are particularly vulnerable, on a low income or benefits should talk to their supplier about its social tariff. Failing that there are plenty of cheap energy plans that households can switch to and this will help them to cut the cost of their energy. This saving can be boosted further by making homes more energy efficient through insulating lofts and cavity walls. Suppliers have a pot of money available to help customers in this way and those who qualify could see their energy bills substantially reduced as a result.”

Infographic showing regional fuel poverty available [here](#).

For more information visit www.uSwitch.com or call 0800 093 06 07

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Notes to editors:

1. Research conducted by YouGov on behalf of uSwitch.com. Total sample size was 2,323 adults with bill paying responsibility for their household, weighted base size for each region as follows: 463 North, 341 Midlands, 162 East, 209 London, 406 South, 96 Wales, 162 Scotland. Fieldwork was undertaken 12th-15th April 2011. The survey was carried out online. The figures were weighted and representative of all GB adults (aged 18+). Fuel poverty calculation = Monthly energy bill divided by net monthly income. Those who were spending 10% or more of their net monthly income on energy bills are classified as being in fuel poverty. Respondents who answered "Don't Know" or "Prefer not to say" have been excluded from fuel poverty calculations.
2. Based on a medium user customer using 3,300 kWh of electricity and 16,500 kWh of gas, on a standard plan paying on receipt of bill with bill sizes averaged across the big six suppliers in each PES region. Wales is covered by two PES regions Swalec and Manweb. The average bill size in these areas is £1,312 a year. Only Sweb is higher at £1,321 a year.
3. Based on a medium user customer using 3,300 kWh of electricity and 16,500 kWh of gas, on a standard plan paying on receipt of bill with bill sizes averaged across all big six suppliers and all regions.
4. BERR previously estimated that for every 1% increase in gas and electricity bills, a further 40,000 households are plunged into fuel poverty. The research in point 1 above showed that 6.3 million or 24% of all households could be classed as fuel poor. The subsequent 14.2% increase in energy prices will have added almost 600,000 more households taking the total number in fuel poverty to 6.9 million.
5. Page 6: Tenure <http://www.decc.gov.uk/assets/decc/Statistics/fuelpoverty/2183-fuel-poverty-2009-detailed-tables.pdf>;

About us

uSwitch.com is a free, impartial, online and telephone-based comparison and switching service, helping consumers compare prices on gas, electricity, water, heating cover, home telephone, broadband, digital television, mobile phones and personal finance products including mortgages, credit cards, current accounts and insurance. In 2010 uSwitch.com celebrated ten years of saving customers money.

uSwitch.com is the first comparison website to achieve the Plain English Campaign's Internet Crystal Mark, which is recognised as a standard that a website has clear language, is accessible and easy to use, and has been tested on a sample of its users.

uSwitch.com is dedicated to helping consumers save money whether they have internet access or not. It offers a dedicated call centre, manned by uSwitch customer service representatives, as well as a freepost 'Send us your bill' service, whereby customers can post their latest energy bills with their telephone number to FREEPOST USWITCH, to get a free call back from a dedicated customer services representative. The service is also available via fax, email and post. Consumers should fax 0203 214 8417, email CustomerServices@uswitch.com or write to Customer Services, uSwitch.com, Centro 3, 19 Mandela Street, London, NW1 0DU with their postcode and usage details.

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