



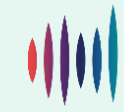
ECA Small Business Energy Consumer Survey 2026

Key Findings



Executive Summary

Rising energy costs are a financial pressure for many small businesses, but they are one of many pressures businesses face



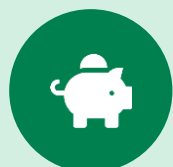
FINANCIAL PRESSURES

The most common financial pressure facing small business energy consumers is the rising cost of goods and inflation (**58%**), followed by reduced customer demand (**47%**). Rising energy costs (electricity/gas) rank third, with **44%** of small businesses identifying them as a financial pressure, while a similar proportion report pressure from rising petrol and diesel costs.



FUEL AND AFFORDABILITY

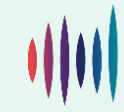
Fuel (petrol/diesel) is most commonly rated as a significant energy-related business expense, with **44%** of small businesses identifying it as one of their highest or a fairly large cost. Electricity and gas are more commonly viewed as moderate costs. Fuel is also the most difficult energy cost to afford, with **35%** finding it difficult to pay for, compared with **24%** who find electricity bills difficult to pay.



HOW BUSINESSES COPE

Among businesses experiencing difficulty affording energy bills, the most common responses are reducing energy use (**42%**) and drawing on savings or cash reserves (**26%**). Around **one in four** are passing higher costs on to customers through price increases.

Many small business energy consumers have limited ability to reduce their energy bills



PREMISES AND CONTROL

More than half (**54%**) lease or rent their premises, limiting their ability to make major structural energy upgrades. Businesses report the greatest control over internal fit-outs such as lighting or painting (**61%**) and equipment or machinery changes (**59%**), while fewer have control over structural upgrades such as installing solar panels (**37%**).



RETAILER CHOICE

72% of small business energy consumers in areas with retail competition say they can choose their retailer, while **20%** say their retailer is selected by a premises management company.



PLANS AND TARIFFS

Around **29%** of small business energy consumers are not confident they are on the best energy plan. Businesses are commonly on either time-of-use tariffs (**34%**) or flat-rate tariffs (**30%**), though **28%** do not know which tariff they are on. Among time-of-use customers, **71%** believe the tariff aligns well with their operating hours.

Support for the energy transition outweighs opposition, but many businesses are unclear about what it means for them



SUPPORT

Almost half (**48%**) of small businesses support Australia's energy transition, compared with **29%** who oppose it.



UNDERSTANDING AND COMMUNICATION

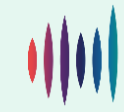
While **46%** understand why Australia is transitioning from fossil fuels to renewable energy, only **37%** understand what steps their business needs to take. Just **23%** feel that government and industry have clearly communicated what the transition means for businesses like theirs.



ACTION ON EMISSIONS

Most small businesses have not yet taken action to reduce emissions (**61%**), although **22%** are considering or planning to act.

There is interest in electrification, but significant barriers remain



GAS USE

Close to **two in five (39%)** small businesses use gas. Key contributors to gas costs include hot water and ventilation or air conditioning, while electricity costs are mainly driven by heating, cooling and ventilation, lighting, office equipment and refrigeration.



SWITCHING FROM GAS

Among businesses using gas, **55%** say they would be likely to choose an electric appliance if their gas appliance failed, while **37%** are unlikely to switch. Barriers to electrification include perceptions that gas performs better or is more suited to business needs. Businesses considering switching identify financial incentives (**53%**), clearer information about costs and benefits (**46%**), and installation support (**37%**) as important enablers.



ELECTRIC VEHICLES

While only **6%** of small businesses already have a fully electric vehicle for their business, **30%** are researching or considering one. Financial incentives and potential cost savings are among the strongest drivers of EV consideration and uptake.

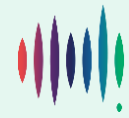


BARRIERS TO ELECTRIC VEHICLE ADOPTION

Businesses unwilling to adopt electric vehicles for work most commonly cite high upfront costs, limited charging infrastructure, concerns about driving range and suitability for regional or heavy-duty use, and scepticism about the environmental benefits of EVs.

Methodology and Sample Profile

Target Population Definition - Small Business Energy Consumers



The survey focuses on genuine small business energy consumers: The target population is defined as Australian businesses with 0–19 employees that hold a dedicated business electricity and/or gas account and have responsibility for energy decisions.

The target population of small business energy consumers is referred to using the term "small businesses" in the following report. Please note that the results are representative of small business energy consumers, rather than all Australian small businesses.

The target sample includes three segments:

- Non-employing businesses with a business energy account
- Micro businesses (1–4 employees) with a business energy account
- Larger small businesses (5–19 employees) with a business energy account

Home-based and non-employing businesses without a dedicated business energy account are excluded, as their energy usage more closely reflects household consumption.

Weighting has been applied to reflect the likelihood of small businesses holding a dedicated energy account normalized against ABS business counts.

Business size band	ABS share of all small businesses	Incidence of dedicated energy account (Actual April 2026)	Rebased share of small-business energy consumers (Weighted proportion)	Number of respondents
Non-employing (0 employees)	64%	15%	34%	N=175
Micro (1–4 employees)	27%	44%	42%	N=312
Larger small (5–19 employees)	9%	75%	24%	N=272
Total	100%		100%	N=759

Survey Methodology and Sample Profile



n=759

Small business energy consumers

- n= 175 Non-employing businesses (0 employees)
- n= 312 Micro businesses (1–4 employees)
- n= 272 Larger small businesses (5–19 employees)



Weighting Approach

- Post-fieldwork weighting is applied to the total result of small business energy consumers and cross tabulations.
- Rim weighting applied by location and business size aligned to ABS benchmarks and rebased to represent the incidence of energy consumers across Australia.



Fieldwork dates

13 April – 10 May 2026



Online survey

The sample was recruited through an accredited and ISO-certified online consumer opt-in panel provider (ORU) and recruited to reflect the true population of small business energy customers, rather than all small businesses.



Representative sample

The total sample achieved is n=759 small business energy consumers. The maximum margin of error on the weighted sample of n=759 at the 95% confidence interval is +/-3.56% providing a robust and reliable evidence base.

Gender

56% Male
44% Female

Age

7% 18-29 years
17% 30-39 years
21% 40-49 years
22% 50-59 years
33% 60+ years

Working situation

47% Self-employed or a sole trader
30% Business owner
9% Director or partner in a business
13% Senior management role in a business

Small business segment

34% Non-employing sole traders
42% Micro businesses (1-4 employees)
24% Larger small businesses (5-19 employees)

Business's approx. annual revenue (before tax)

9% Less than \$50,000
14% \$50,000 - \$99,999
16% \$100,000 - \$249,999
14% \$250,000 - \$499,999
7% \$500,000 - \$749,999
6% \$750,000 - \$999,999
10% \$1,000,000 - \$1,999,999
8% \$2,000,000 - \$4,999,999
3% \$5,000,000 - \$7,999,999
1% \$8,000,000 - \$9,999,999
1% \$10,000,000 or more
11% Unsure / prefer not to say

Survey Methodology and Sample Profile

Location where the respondent lives

33% NSW
25% VIC
20% QLD
10% WA
7% SA
2% ACT
2% TAS
1% NT

77% Metro
22% Regional
1% Rural/Remote

Industry business operates in

12% Professional, Scientific and Technical Services
12% Retail Trade and Sales
10% Health Care and Social Assistance
10% Construction and Trades
6% Financial and Insurance Services
6% Education and Training
5% Arts and Recreational Services
5% Accommodation, Food Services and Hospitality
4% Wholesale Trade
4% Manufacturing
4% Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing
3% Rental, Hiring, Real Estate
2% Information Media and Telecommunications
2% Transport, Postal and Warehousing
2% Administrative and Support Services
1% Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services
1% Mining
0% Public Administration and Safety
10% Other Services
0% Don't know

Primary office or main place of work

22% Greater Sydney
12% Rest of NSW
19% Greater Melbourne
6% Rest of VIC
8% Greater Brisbane
11% Rest of QLD
6% Greater Adelaide
1% Rest of SA
8% Greater Perth
2% Rest of WA
2% Tasmania
1% Northern Territory

Location where the business mainly operates

33% NSW
25% VIC
19% QLD
10% WA
7% SA
2% Tasmania
2% ACT
1% NT

Decision maker on energy

72% I am responsible
23% I share responsibility with someone else
5% Someone else does these things, but I have some involvement or knowledge
0% My business doesn't pay any energy bills/ I'm not involved at all

Cultural background

20% I prefer to speak a language other than English at home or with close family members

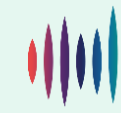
20% I was born in a predominantly non-English-speaking country

How business pays for electricity and/or gas

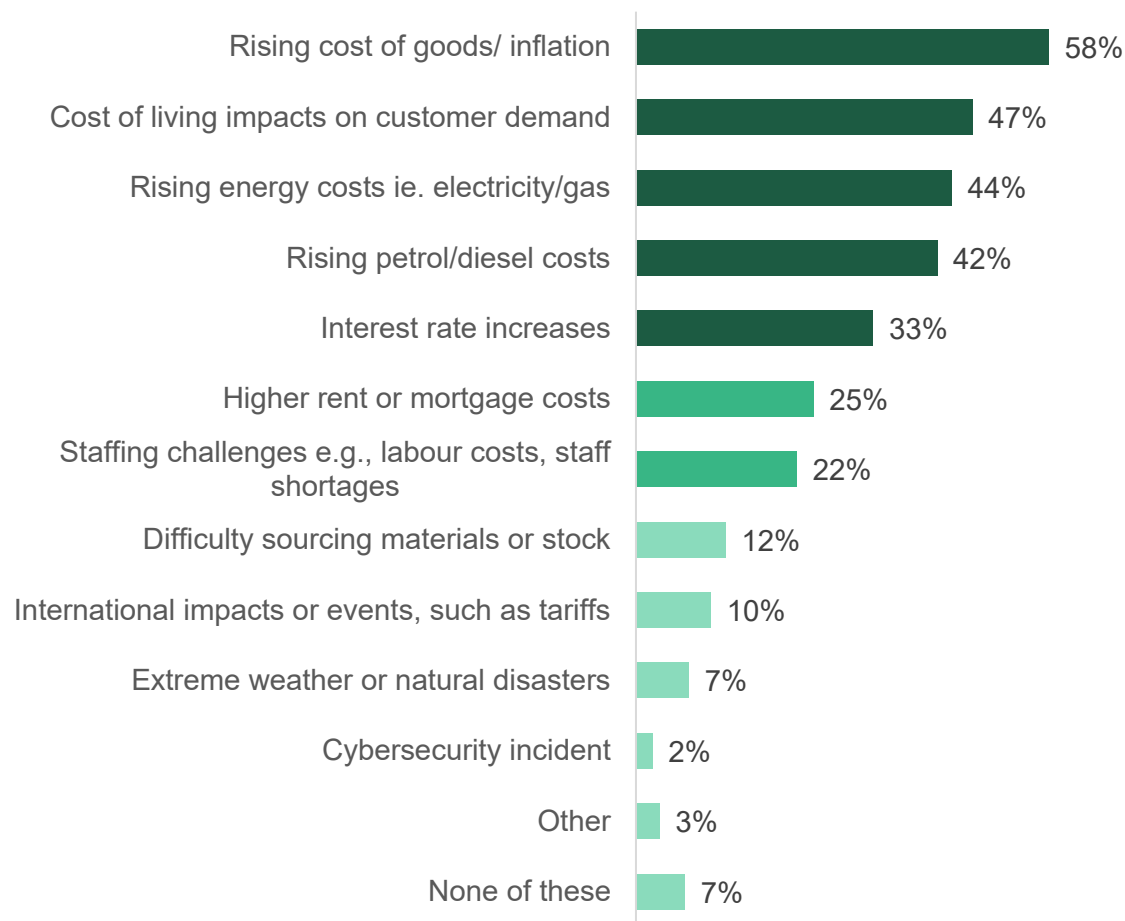
80% Electricity and/or gas is billed in the business name
7% Energy is supplied via a shopping center, strata or building management and billed through a third party
13% Energy costs are included in rent or service charges – bundled into lease payments, rent or operating costs
0% Home based business – business energy costs are not separated from home energy costs
0% I don't know/ none of the above

Energy Affordability

Rising cost of goods, weaker consumer demand and rising energy costs are the biggest financial pressures facing small business



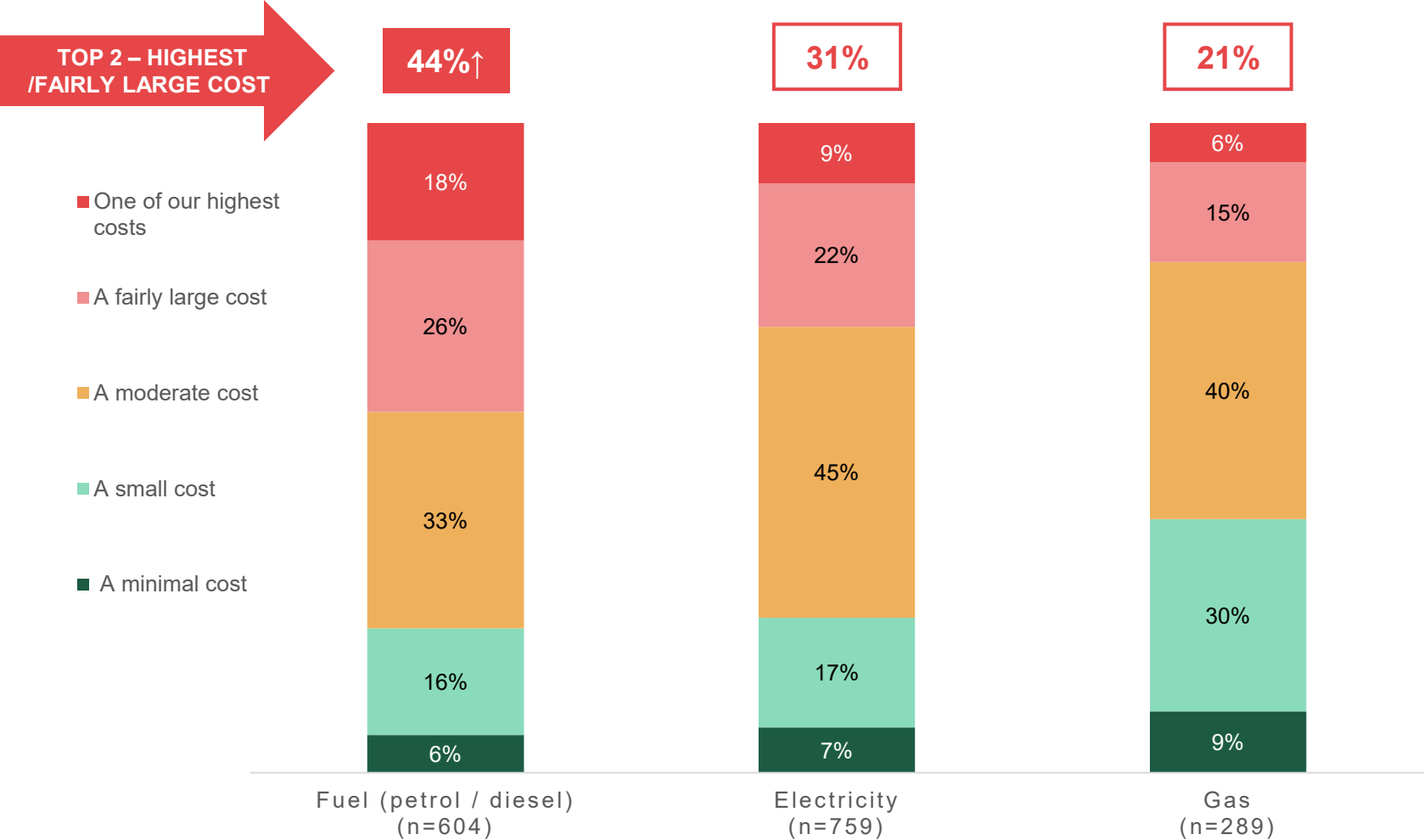
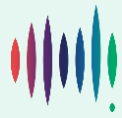
Significant impacts on small businesses' financial performance



Other:

Winding down business
Health issues
AI takeover
illness
Getting new customers
Peer competition
Death of a loved one
Rural conditions not ideal
Economic climate
Cattle market prices
Government regulations
Regulatory changes increasing time spent on government paperwork
Health of directors
Increased insurance costs
Government policies
Downturn in government procurement of consultants
Immigration policy
General cost increases affecting businesses; reduces or curtails opportunities.
We are a start up.
industry restructuring
Taxes
Tax burden

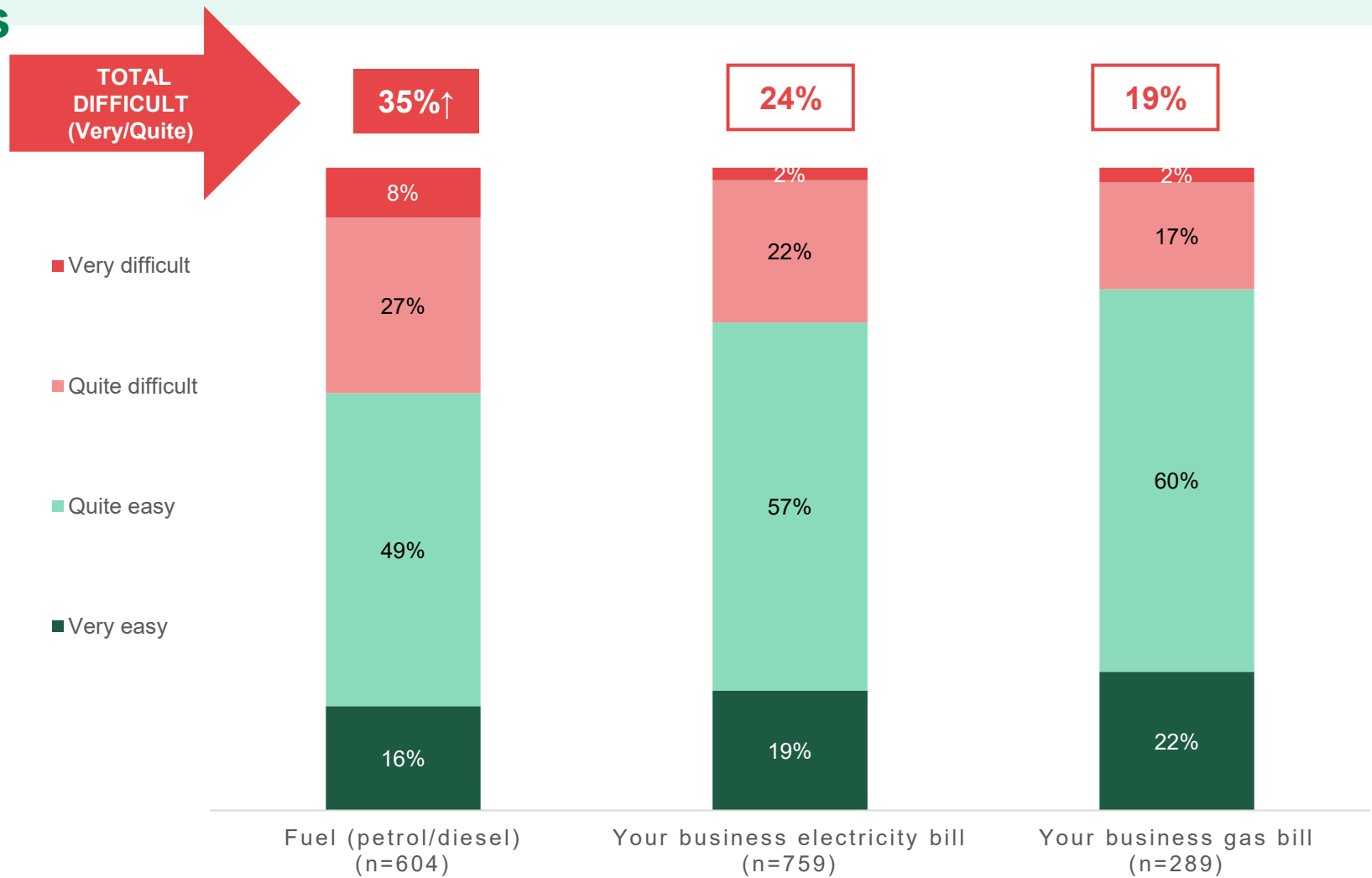
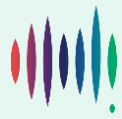
Fuel is the highest energy-related cost for small businesses, while electricity and gas are viewed as moderate expenses



Note: Petrol/diesel questions were asked only of businesses that use a vehicle for work (Q12 = 1, 2 or 3). However, as fuel (petrol/diesel) use may also relate to other business activities (e.g. generators, machinery, farming equipment), responses may reflect broader business petrol/diesel use.

Source: Q13. Relative to other business expenses, how significant are energy costs to your business? (Select one answer per item) (weighted)

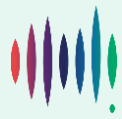
Fuel is considered the most difficult energy cost to afford, while electricity and gas are difficult to afford for around one in four small businesses



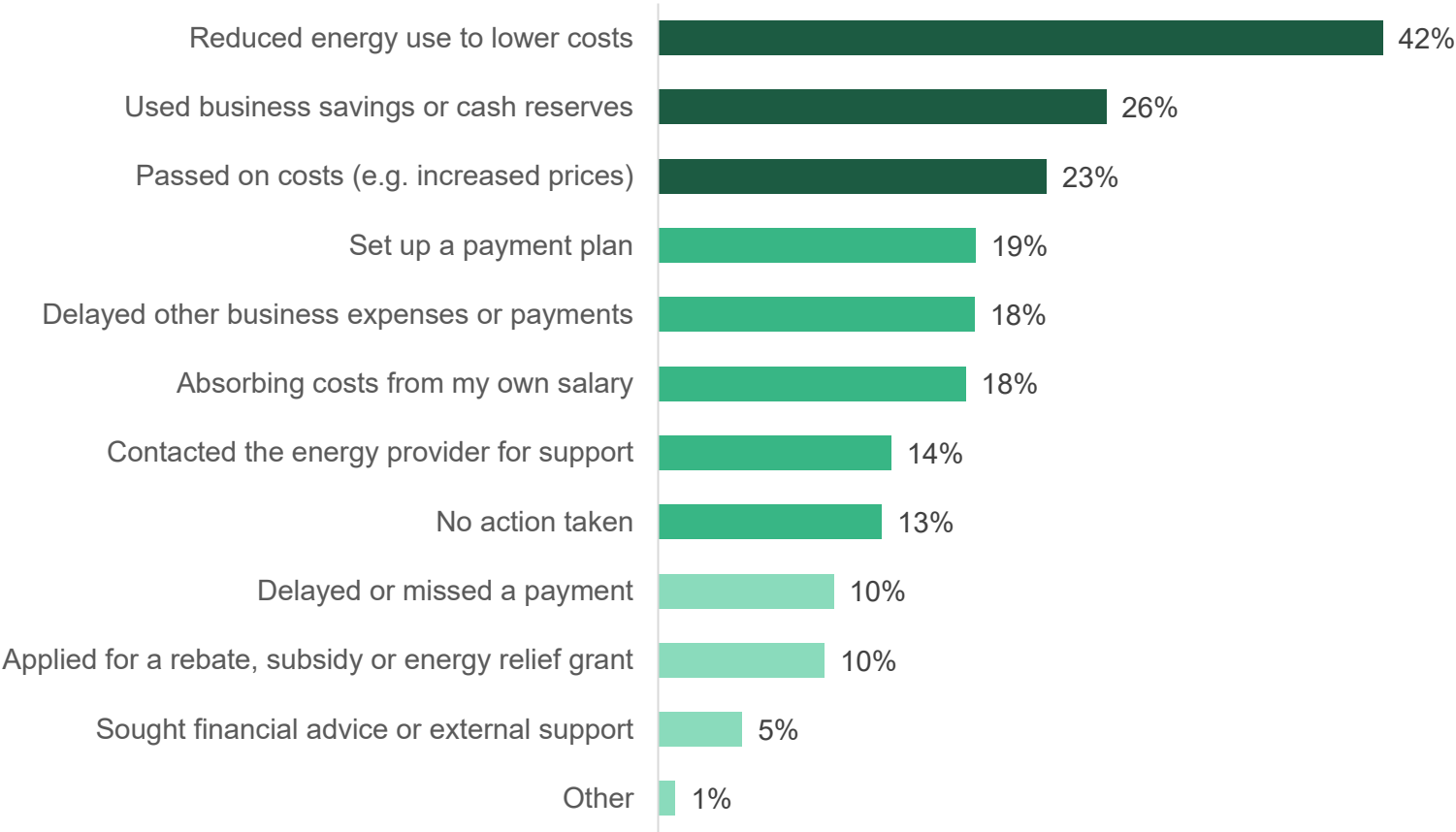
Note: Petrol/diesel questions were asked only of businesses that use a vehicle for work (Q12 = 1, 2 or 3). However, as fuel (petrol/diesel) use may also relate to other business activities (e.g. generators, machinery, farming equipment), responses may reflect broader business petrol/diesel use.

Source: Q14. How easy or difficult has it been for your business to afford each of the following energy bills in full and on time, over the past 12 months? (Select one answer per item) (weighted)

Reducing energy use is the main action small businesses are taking to manage energy cost pressures

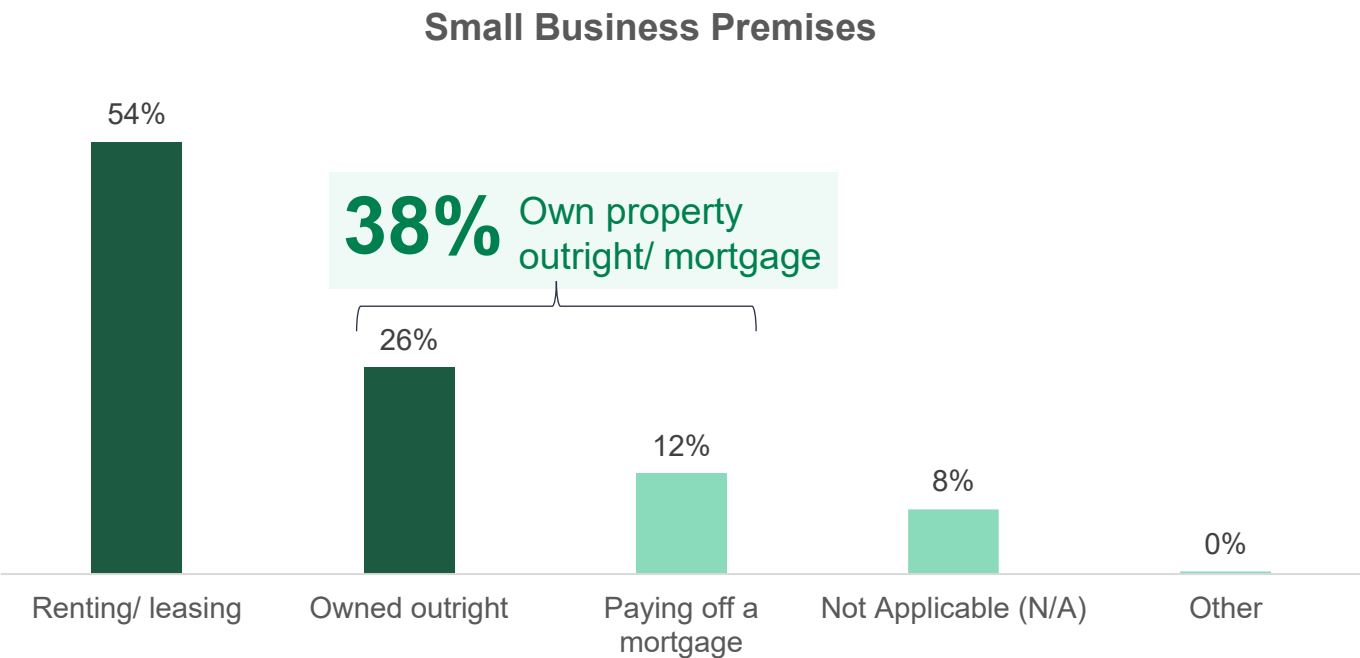
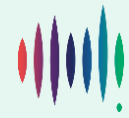


Actions businesses have taken to afford energy bills
(Base = those who find it quite/very difficult to afford energy bills)



Control and Choice

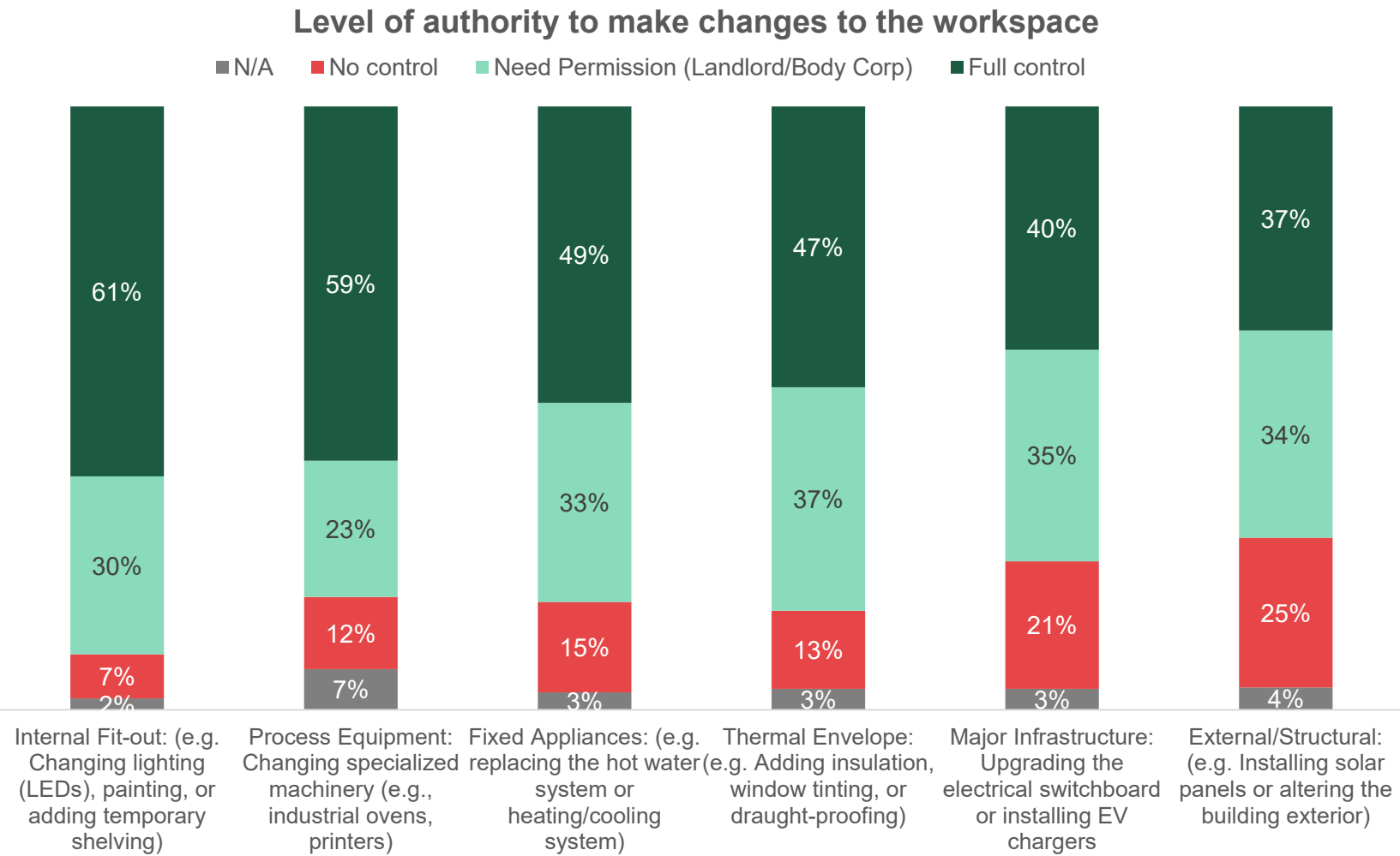
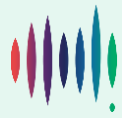
Most small businesses operate from leased premises, while over a quarter own their business location outright



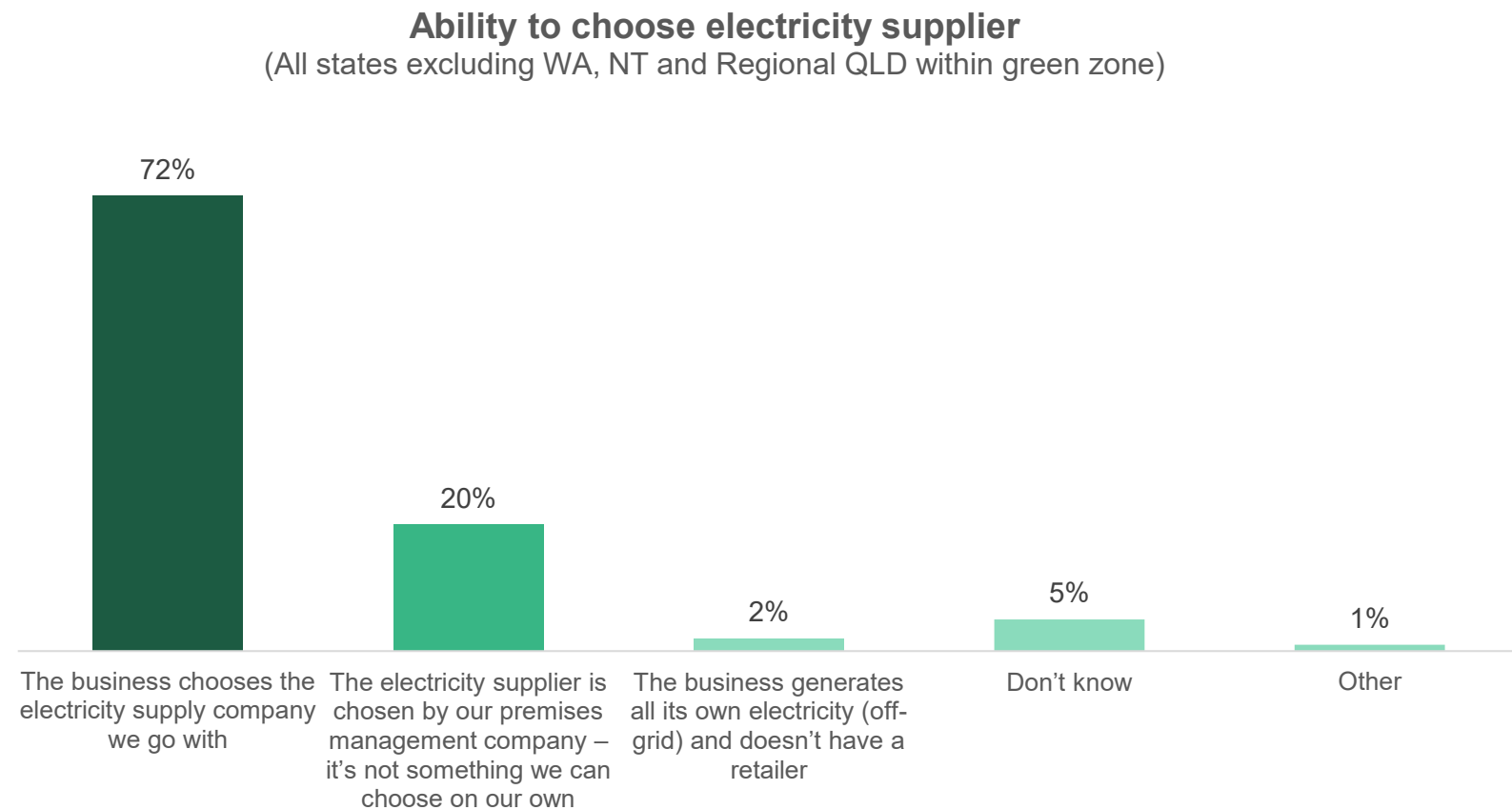
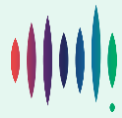
Column %	Non-employing sole traders	Micro (1–4 employees)	Larger small (5–19 employees)
Renting/ leasing	45% ↓	57%	60%
Owned outright	25%	25%	27%
Paying off a mortgage	13%	13%	9%
Not Applicable (N/A)	16% ↑	5% ↓	3% ↓
Other	1%	0%	0%
Column n=	175	312	272

Significantly higher @ 95% confidence; Significantly lower @ 95% confidence

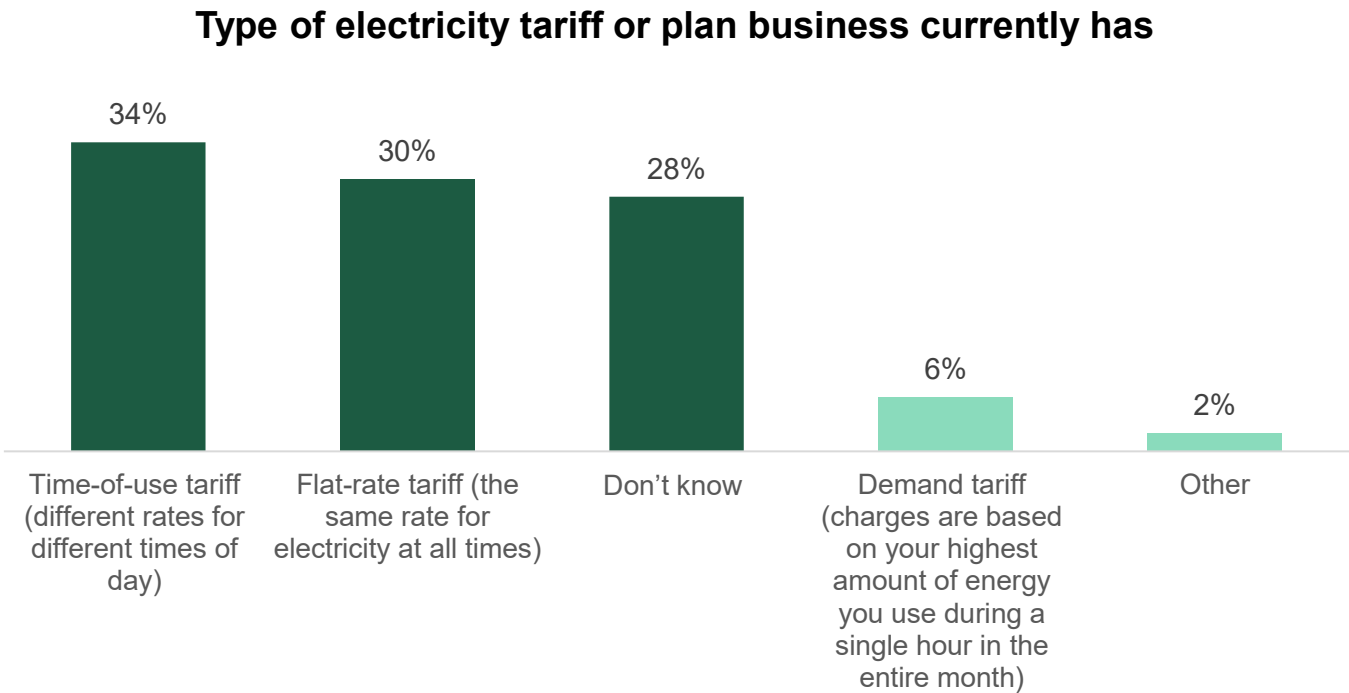
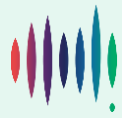
Businesses have most control over internal fit-outs and equipment changes, but face limitations on major building upgrades



Most small businesses choose their electricity supplier. Only one in five are constrained by property management



Most businesses say they are on a time-of-use (TOU) or flat-rate retail electricity plan

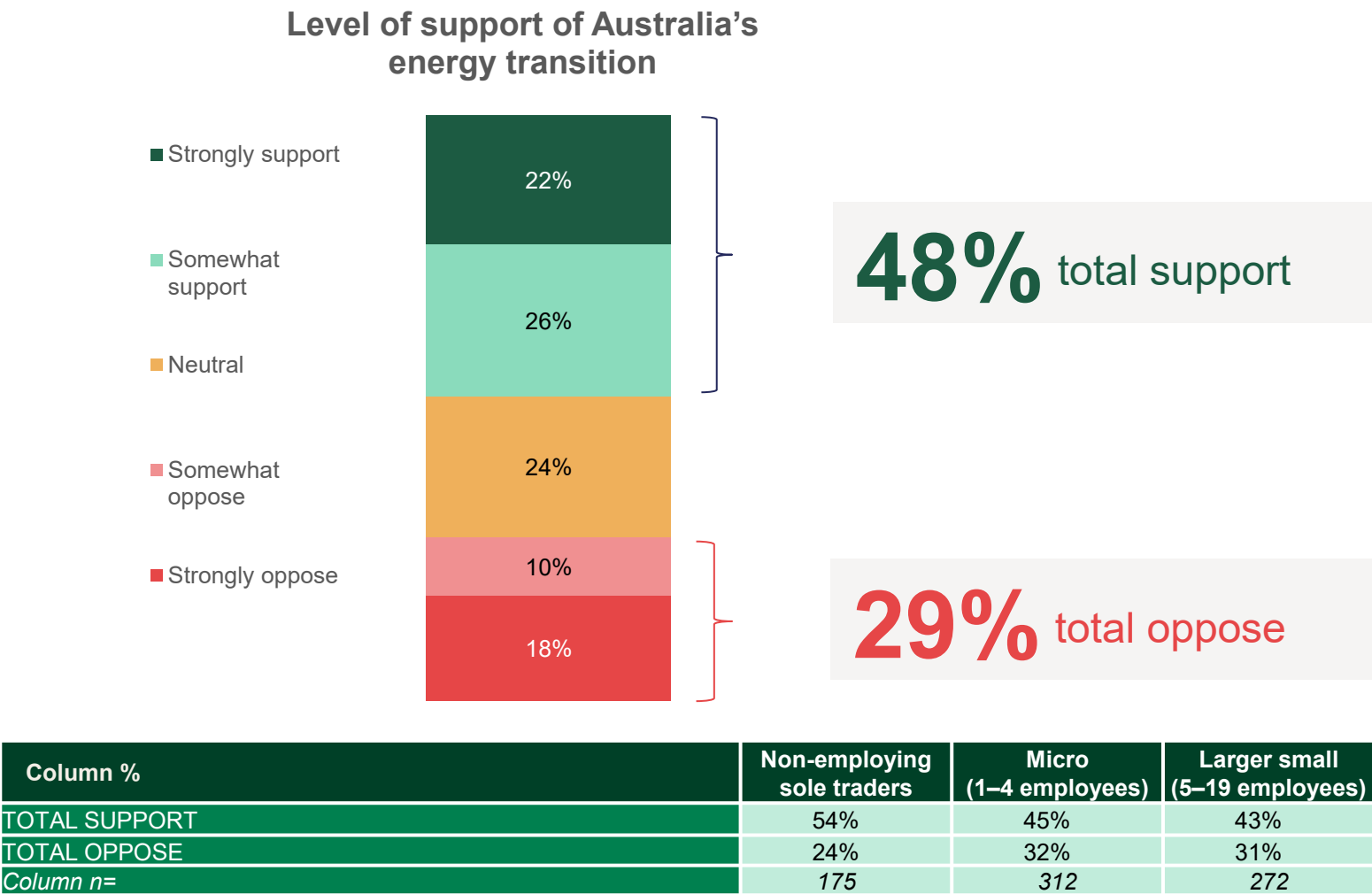
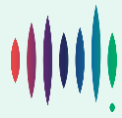


Column %	Non-employed sole traders	Micro (1–4 employees)	Larger small (5–19 employees)
Time-of-use tariff	26%	40%	36%
Flat-rate tariff	30%	29%	34%
Don't know	36% ↑	23%	24%
Demand tariff	5%	6%	6%
Other	2%	2%	1%
Column n=	175	312	272

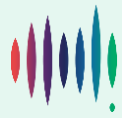
Significantly higher @ 95% confidence; Significantly lower @ 95% confidence

Understanding the Energy Transition

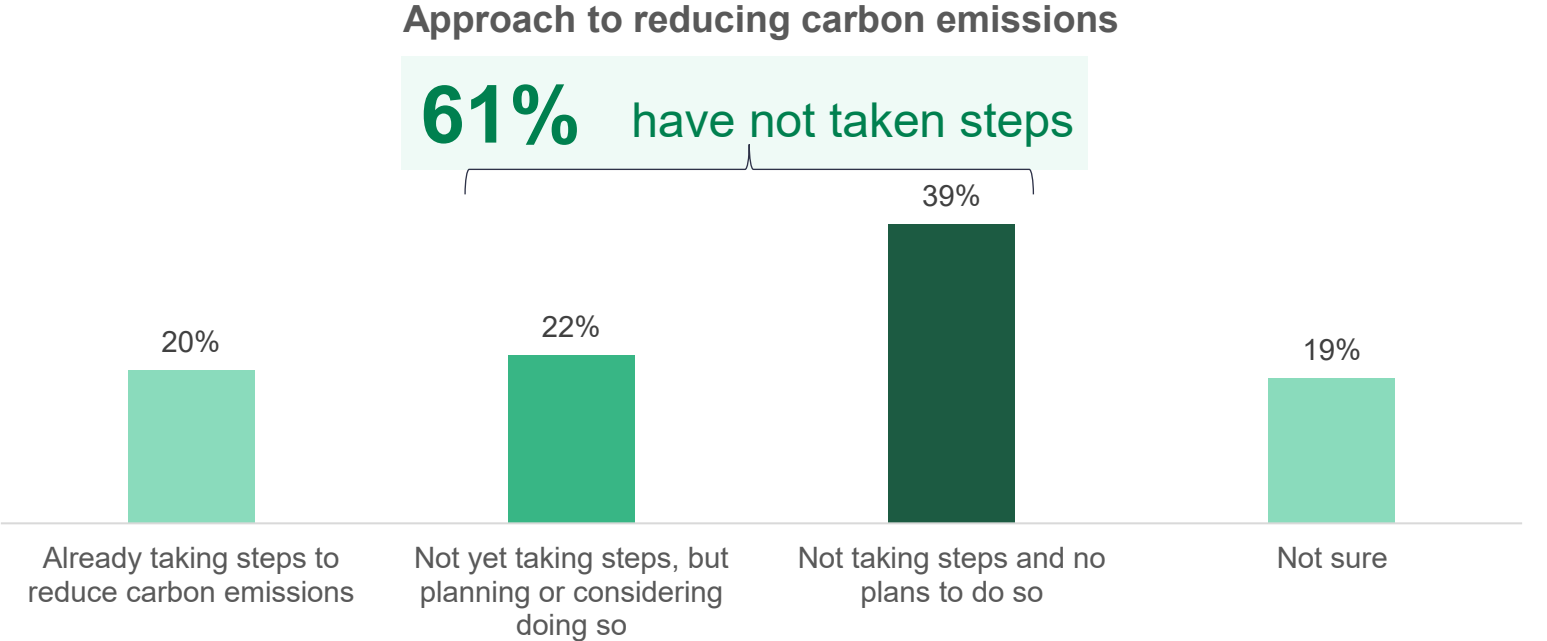
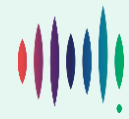
Small businesses are more likely to support than oppose Australia's transition to renewable energy



Only 23% of businesses say government and industry have clearly communicated what the energy transition means for them



Most small businesses have not taken any steps yet to reduce carbon emissions. Around 1 in 5 are planning to do so

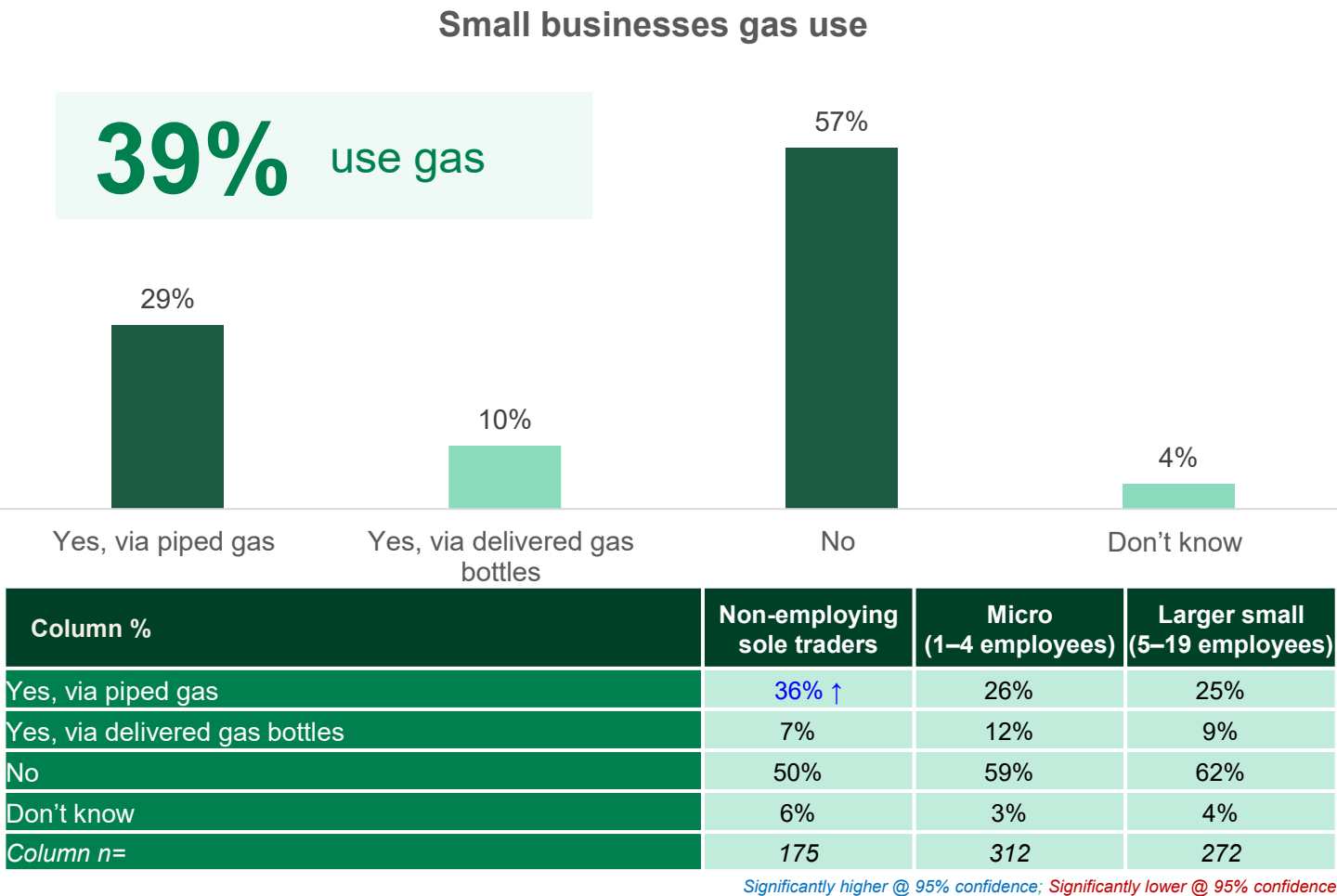
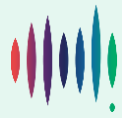


Column %	Non-employing sole traders	Micro (1–4 employees)	Larger small (5–19 employees)
Already taking steps to reduce carbon emissions	19%	18%	26%
Not yet taking steps, but planning or considering doing so	19%	27%	18%
Not taking steps and no plans to do so	35%	41%	40%
Not sure	27% ↑	14%	15%
Column n=	175	312	272

Significantly higher @ 95% confidence; Significantly lower @ 95% confidence

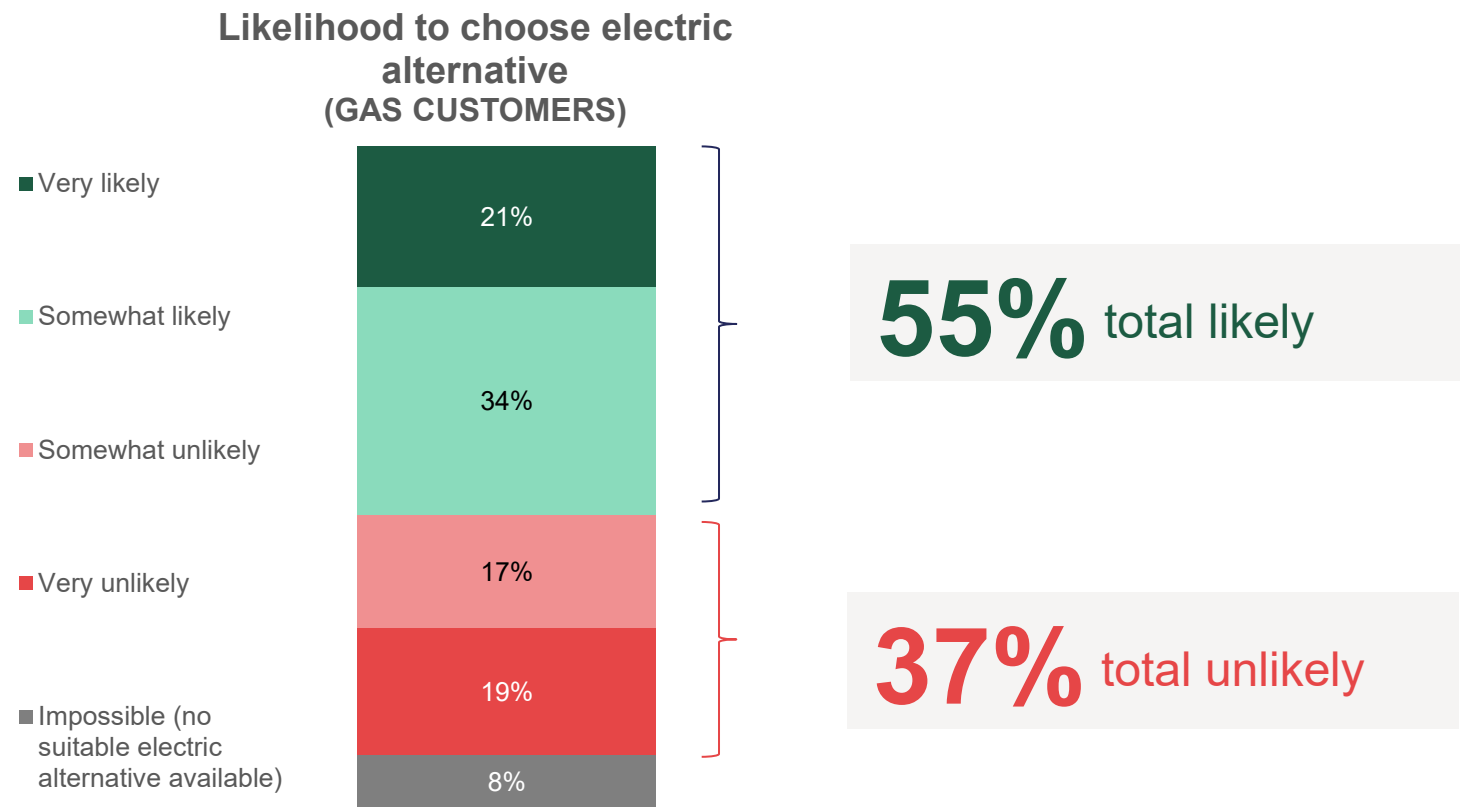
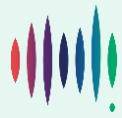
Electrification: Barriers and Enablers

Over half of small businesses are not connected to gas, while nearly two in five use piped or bottled gas



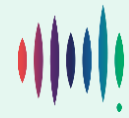
Significantly higher @ 95% confidence; Significantly lower @ 95% confidence

Just over half of small businesses would likely switch to electric when replacing failed gas appliances

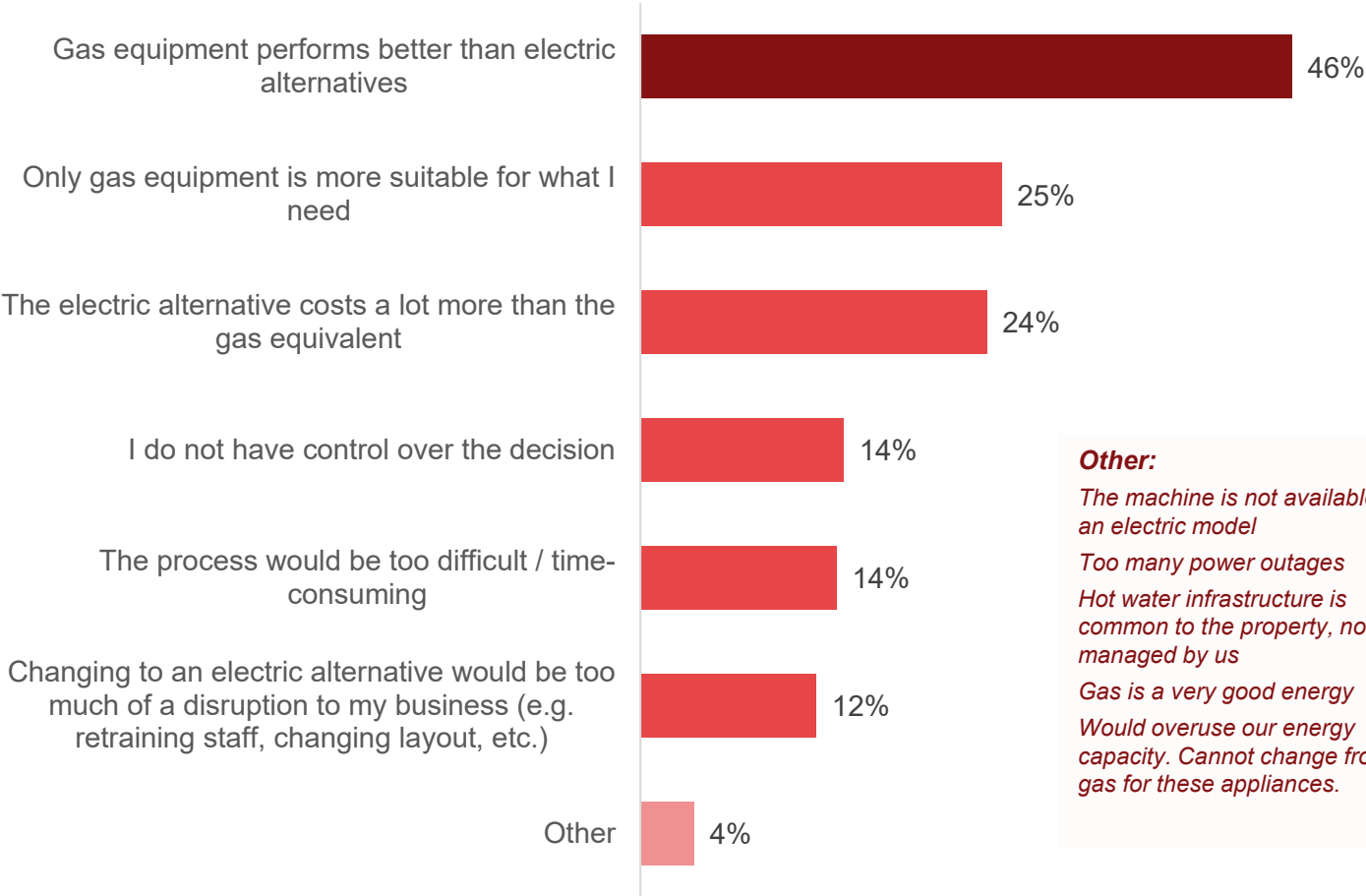


Column %	Non-employed sole traders	Micro (1–4 employees)	Larger small (5–19 employees)
TOTAL LIKELY	60%	50%	57%
TOTAL UNLIKELY	32%	41%	35%
Column n=	77	118	94

Performance and suitability of gas appliances are key perceived barriers to electrification among businesses unlikely or unable to switch

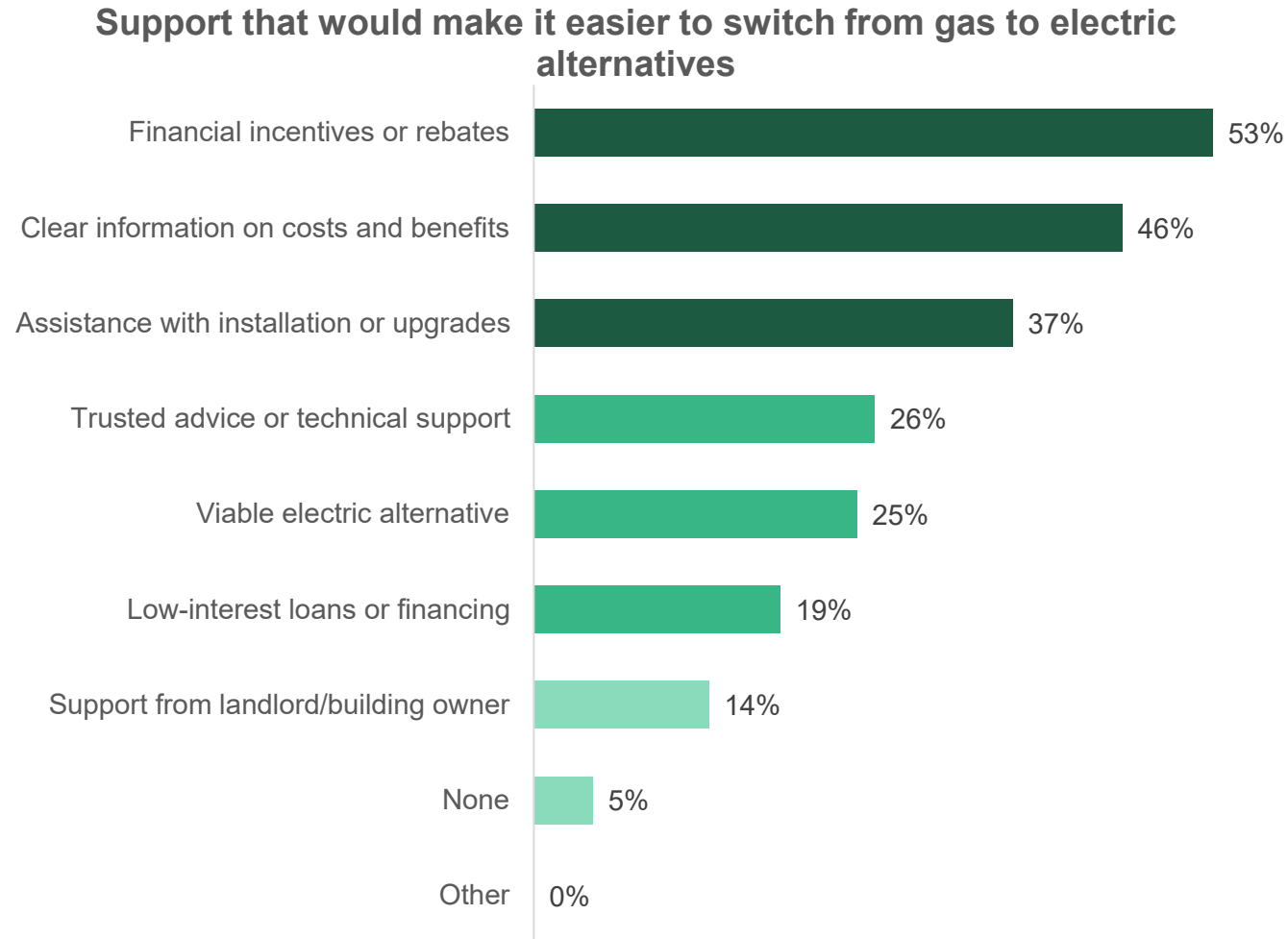


Reasons unlikely/impossible to replace gas appliance

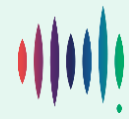


Other:
The machine is not available in an electric model
Too many power outages
Hot water infrastructure is common to the property, not managed by us
Gas is a very good energy
Would overuse our energy capacity. Cannot change from gas for these appliances.

Financial support and clear information are key enablers for businesses considering switching from gas to electric

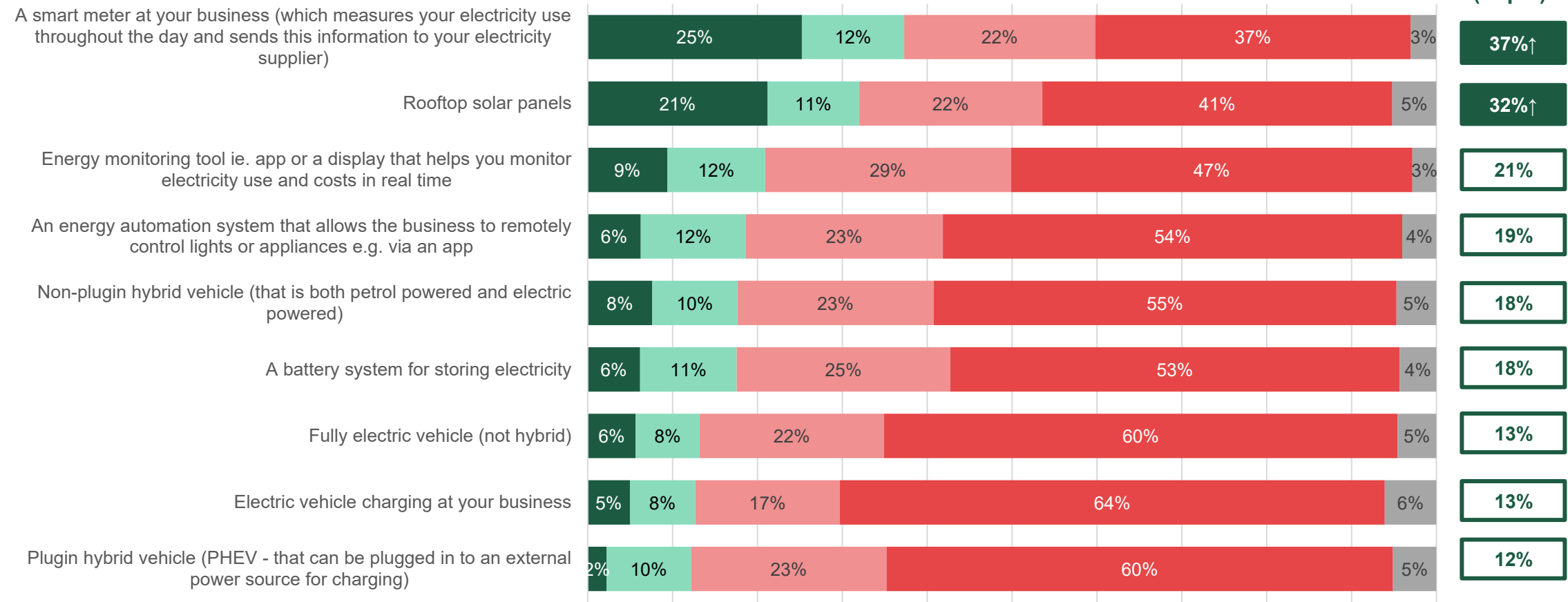


Rooftop solar leads current uptake, while fewer have adopted electric vehicles and batteries



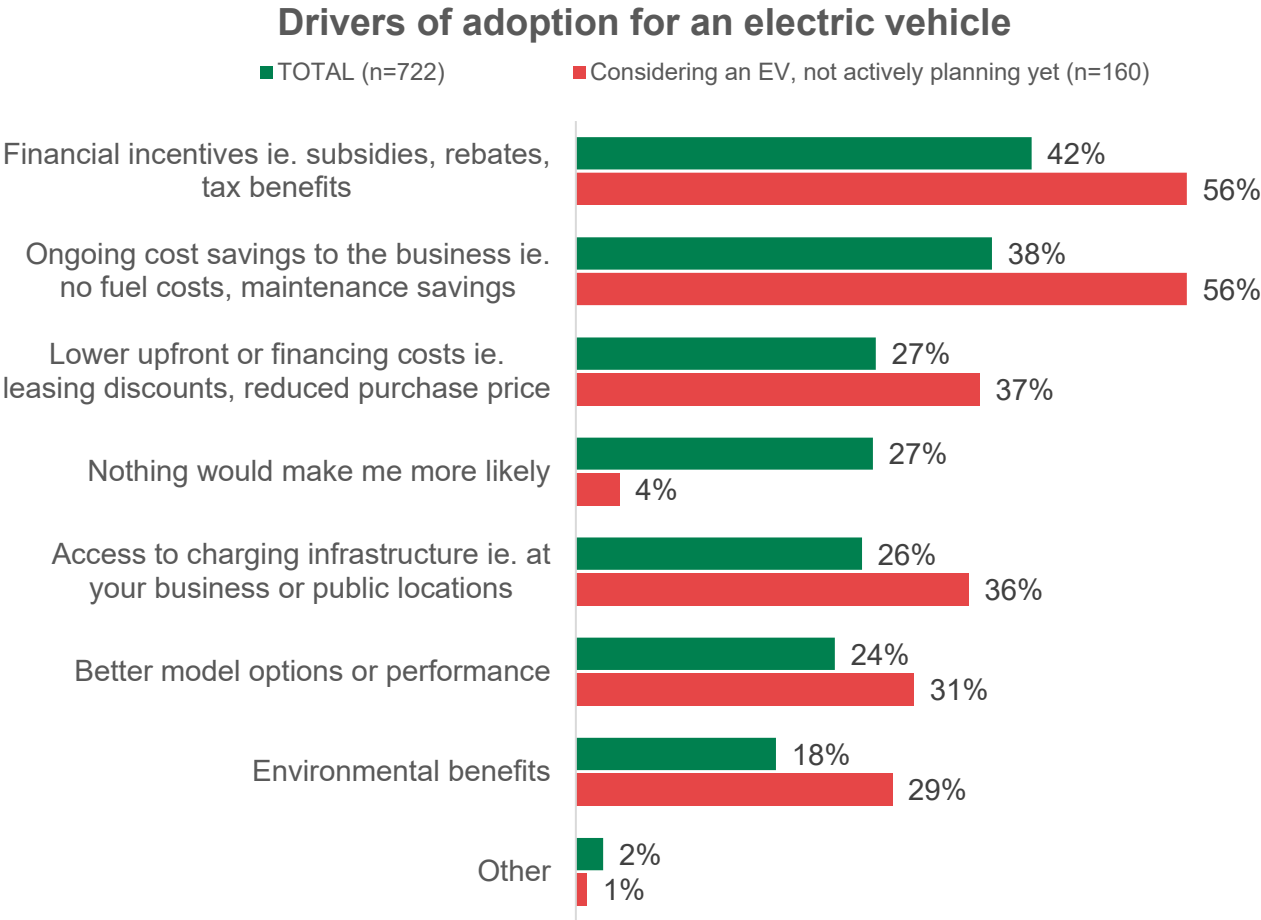
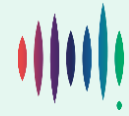
Small business adoption of clean energy technology

HAVE THIS / ACTIVELY RESEARCHING (Top 2)



■ Already have this ■ Actively researching or planning to implement ■ Considering, but not actively planning yet ■ Not considering ■ Not applicable

Financial incentives and cost savings are the strongest drivers of electric vehicle uptake for small business



Cost, infrastructure and distrust drive resistance to electric vehicle use for work purposes



Businesses unwilling to adopt electric vehicles for work most commonly cited high upfront costs, limited charging infrastructure, concerns about range and suitability for regional or heavy-duty use, and scepticism about the environmental benefits of EVs. Many also expressed a strong personal preference for petrol or diesel vehicles, with some indicating no operational need for work vehicles at all.

Cost and affordability	Infrastructure and charging limitations	Rural and operational unsuitability	Environmental and sustainability scepticism	Distrust and negative perceptions of EVs	Preference for petrol/diesel vehicles	No need or low relevance to business	Hybrid seen as a more practical alternative
<i>"Too expensive, don't know much about safety or longevity of product, not enough infrastructure"</i> <i>"EV's lose value quickly and when battery needs replacing is too expensive"</i> <i>"Can't afford now"</i> <i>"too expensive and low resale values and many other factors"</i>	<i>"Infrastructure does not accommodate long distance uninterrupted travel or is it practical at this stage compared to fossil fuels"</i> <i>"Lack of recharging stations."</i> <i>"I live in a country area electric chargers a few and far between"</i> <i>"No access to electrical charging."</i> <i>"We are in rural and remote areas and EVs are incapable of operating effectively"</i>	<i>"Can't tow heavy trailers"</i> <i>"Wouldn't work in our line of work"</i> <i>"I and my reps travel vast distances and need a) rugged, reliability and b) usually a 4wd."</i> <i>"We travel large distances and EV vehicles will not work given remote locations"</i> <i>"Absolutely useless in the bush"</i>	<i>"Production of battery is polluting and exploiting third world workers"</i> <i>"I don't think it's a good use of resources, batteries use rare earth minerals and are hard to dispose of."</i> <i>"Takes coal to make the battery it saves nothing"</i> <i>"Because of the dirty batteries that are being made for EV cars. More damaging to the environment"</i>	<i>"I don't trust them"</i> <i>"They are not reliable and often catch fire"</i> <i>"I don't think they are made well"</i> <i>"Poor design, dangerous"</i> <i>"They're a joke"</i>	<i>"I'm an internal combustion engine kind of guy"</i> <i>"I want diesel powered trucks"</i> <i>"I have driven petrol cars all my life and i love the sound of a V8"</i> <i>"I like my V8"</i>	<i>"I don't use a vehicle for the work I do."</i> <i>"We don't use vehicles for work"</i> <i>"No need for vehicle"</i> <i>"Motor vehicles not used for business purposes"</i>	<i>"More kilometres with a hybrid"</i> <i>"Not interested in a fully EV car - have a hybrid and that works well for us"</i> <i>"I don't like the full electric car. I do own a hybrid"</i> <i>"I don't think we are advanced enough for full electric but i do drive a hybrid"</i>



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