

# Fuel poverty in Scotland

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# The Citizens Advice network

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- Citizens Advice Scotland, 59 local Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB), the Extra Help Unit and our online advice site together form Scotland's **largest independent advice network**
- Our advice is **free, confidential and impartial** advice
- 2020/2021 – the network supported over 171,000 people across Scotland helping unlock nearly £147 million in financial gain



# National overview

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- In 2019, 24.6% of households in Scotland were in fuel poverty
- Among those 613,000 households, more than half found themselves in extreme fuel poverty
- Even higher fuel poverty rates (43%) if we consider the households which rely on electric heating
- Impact of the pandemic – SG estimates suggest the rate of fuel poverty could have increased by as much as 18% in 2020



# What is fuel poverty?

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*'Client lives with and cares for his elderly parents. He himself is unable to work due to ill health/disability. His energy supplier recently notified him that charges would be going up and based on estimated annual usage will cost £356 per month.'*

*'Client is on Universal Credit, has a four-year-old child and is in need of urgent help to be able to top-up her meter. Her energy supplier have refused to help her, stating she has had too many discretionary payments.'*

*'Client would like the windows of her rented property permanently sealed as her husband has a number of health conditions that require a warm home. Their heating system is ineffective and thermal efficiency is poor.'*



# Our data

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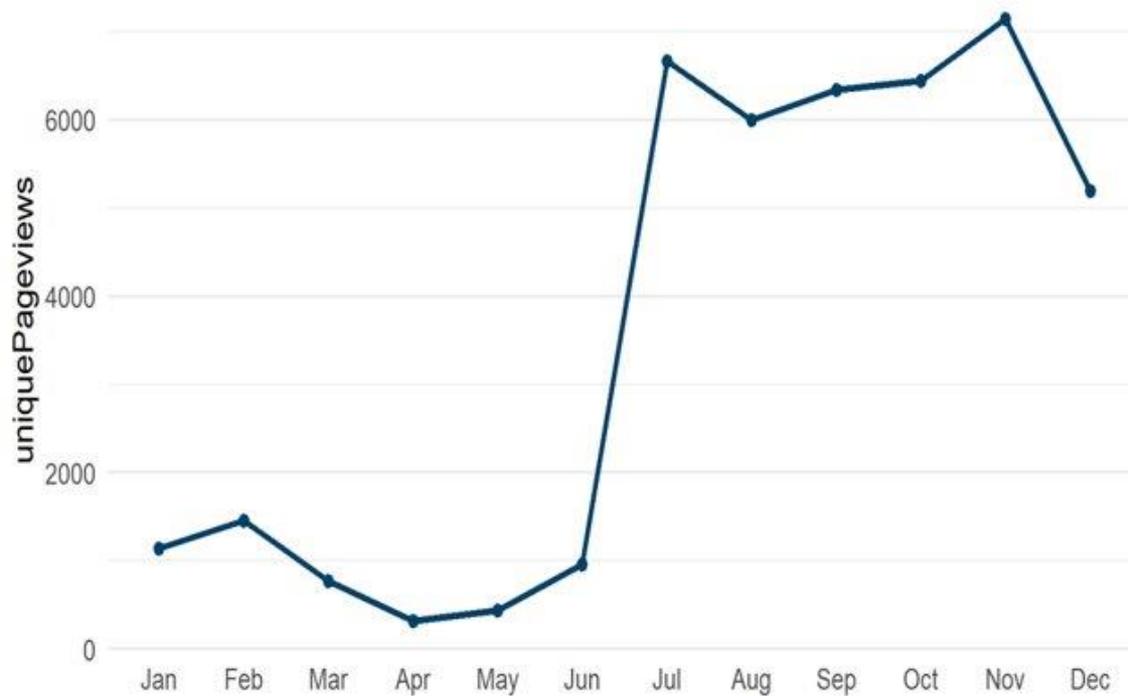
- The Citizens Advice network holds the largest set of data on societal issues outside of the public sector
- 2020 – Warm Home Discount becomes the top energy issue on which people seek advice from their local CAB, overtaking billing and metering
- Notable increases in the amount of advice on prepayment meters and advice for those in energy crisis (e.g. seeking information on fuel vouchers)



# Demand for energy efficiency advice/support

Unique page views by month

Funding for energy efficiency in homes - Citizens Advice Scotland



# Affordable Warmth Survey

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- Just under 400 respondents
- Are you able to keep your home warm? 32% said 'no' or 'sometimes' (excluding the 'no answers')
- Do you have sufficient insulation in your home? 35% said 'no'
- Strong indicators of fuel poverty which are consistent with the fuel poverty rate of 33% in the Highland area (SHCS)



# Fuel type – Scotland and Sutherland

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Fuel type	Scotland (SHCS; 2019)	Sutherland
Mains gas	81%	0%
Electricity	11%	37%
Oil	5%	35%
Solid mineral fuel	1%	Coal - 12%, Logs – 5%
LPG	1%	3%
Biomass	1%	2.6%



*'I have to keep the heating between 12-15 degrees as if it is above that I go through a lot of oil. I turn it right down to 10 when I go to bed.'*

*'In winter we spend £130 a week on electricity.'*

*'I sometimes turn the heating off to extend the time until I need to place an oil order.'*

*'I prioritise to make sure there is warmth when the kids are home, heating one room where possible. During the winter we have the fire on through the day to warm the living room and only heat upstairs first thing in the morning and at night for the kids going to bed.'*

*'Why is electricity so expensive when we produce so much locally?'*



# What can be done?

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- There are solutions to poverty and specifically fuel poverty, we know what they are and **we need action from governments and decision-makers** to solve the causes
- Increased funding for energy efficiency specifically
- Move levies currently on energy bills onto general taxation
- Reform the Warm Home Discount in Scotland using devolved powers
- Stronger protection for consumers adopting new technology e.g. low carbon heating systems



# Looking ahead to net zero

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- A Just Transition will allow inequalities in communities to be addressed
- Taking advantage of that opportunity requires many voices – **there should not be a one-size fits all approach**
- We must not be blind to the different ways different people experience fuel poverty, particularly those with the protected characteristics
- We must consider the differences between urban and rural and remote communities



# Thank you.

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