



Cadent | Cultural Deep Dive

Summary of research findings

Cadent
Your Gas Network

Thinks
— Insight & Strategy —

Contents

- 1.** Executive summary
- 2.** Our evolving definition of culture
- 3.** The role of culture within energy use, attitudes and behaviours
 - 3.1.** Cooking behaviours
 - 3.2.** Heating behaviours
 - 3.3.** No gas scenario
- 4.** Culture and attitudes to finances and bills
- 5.** Culture and sustainability

01.

Executive summary

Background and objectives

Cadent commissioned Thinks Insight & Strategy to provide new evidence on how cultural background – including ethnicity and religion – shapes attitudes to heating and cooking. While previous research has explored vulnerability in relation to energy use, this study fills a gap by focussing specifically on the unique needs and preferences faced by different communities in relation to gas.

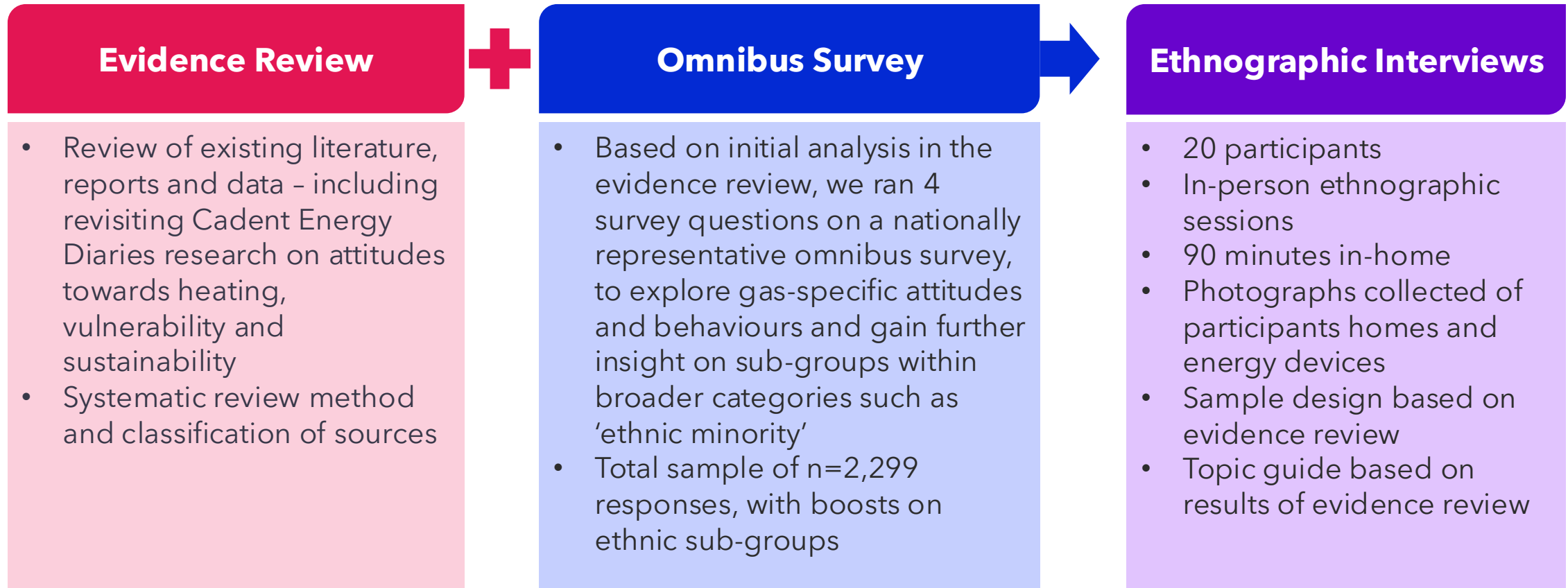
Thinks conducted an evidence review, followed by a series of in-home ethnographic interviews with a diverse group of people served by Cadent.

Overall, this research seeks to answer three key questions:

1. How do differences in culture (including ethnicity and religion) impact attitudes towards heating and use of gas appliances in the home?
2. Which communities are most likely to have unique needs if gas is no longer available?
3. What can be done to better respect the needs of these communities (in terms of the future energy landscape)?



Our approach included a review of the existing evidence, as well as new quantitative and qualitative research



Key insights

1	This research has broadened our definition of culture ; highlighting the role of cultural heritage, social norms and family values in shaping identity, alongside intersectional factors. Generational differences, histories of migration and multiculturalism in the UK also contribute to blended cultural practices and sense of identity.
2	Cooking, and preference for gas appliances, is often tied to cultural heritage , particularly amongst Asian and Caribbean participants. Gas stoves are perceived as offering superior cooking performance and techniques, often necessary for certain cultural dishes.
3	Heating behaviours are mainly influenced by household dynamics and cost, but culture does influence perceptions of 'comfort' . Participants describe making heating decisions based on cultural attitudes towards hospitality, religious teachings, and temperature preferences in the home.
4	Participants initially react strongly against a 'no gas' scenario but feel they could adapt if necessary . Cost implications of any change are concerning, as well as the ability to cook cultural dishes without gas. However, most feel they would eventually be able to adapt, and some already have.
5	Management of energy bills can be culturally influenced - but is mostly pragmatic . Participants, particularly from Asian backgrounds, describe cultural norms and family upbringing as impacting financial attitudes, as well as roles in managing bills. However, even for these participants, there are often pragmatic reasons for one person taking the lead.
6	Religious beliefs influence some participants' views on sustainability . Several religious participants directly link their sustainability attitudes and behaviours to religious teachings on respecting nature, reducing waste and safeguarding future generations. However, these 'moral' themes are also motivating for non-religious participants.

Considerations for the sector

Affordability remains key

This research has shown that while culture does play some role in shaping energy attitudes and behaviours, **practical considerations** such as affordability and housing are more influential. **Intersectional challenges** (e.g. socio-economic and other vulnerability factors) mean that this might particularly impact ethnic minority groups, as highlighted in the evidence review.

Adaptability impacts future scenarios

Cooking is more culturally influenced than heating and is where a **no-gas scenario** is more likely to present challenges. While these audiences generally feel they would be able to adapt, there is a compelling case to be made about the **emotive attachment that people have to gas cooking** – and how losing this would impact their ability to feel connected with cultural heritage and identity.

Sustainability can connect with culture

Engaging cultural communities with the future energy landscape will benefit from **developing a culturally informed narrative about changes such as Net Zero**. This research has shown that faith and religious teachings may be motivating for some groups – offering emotive and moral reasons to be more sustainable.

02.

Our evolving definition of culture

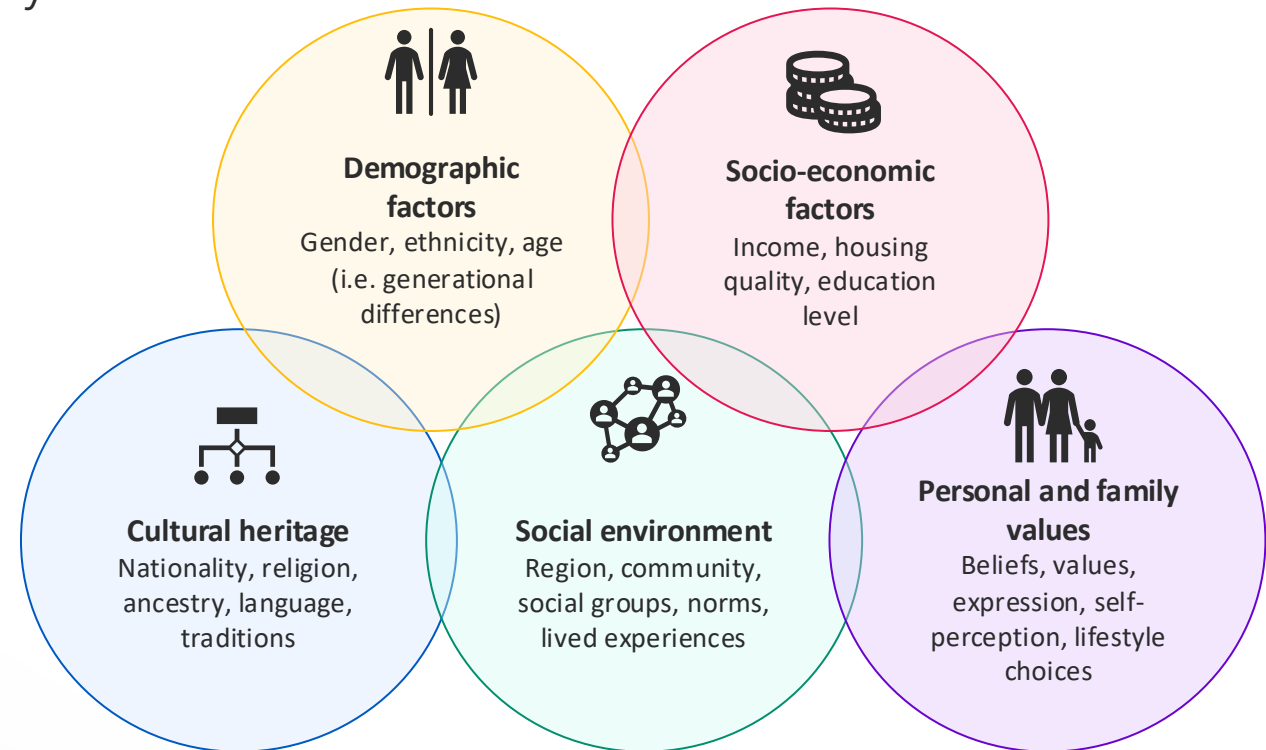
This research has broadened our definition of culture

For the purposes of the evidence review, we defined culture as:

*The **shared beliefs, practices, and meanings** that people learn, create, and practise **within a community**, shaping how they approach everyday life - including how they understand and use energy*

Within this, we also considered **intersectional factors** likely to influence culture, such as ethnicity, religion, **socio-economic** and **demographic characteristics**, such as age and gender.

However, **the ethnography stage highlighted a wider set of factors** - including cultural heritage, social norms and family values - that should be considered when defining culture. We broadened our definition to include these five key areas:



The multicultural nature of UK society also shapes participants' sense of culture and identity

- Participants living in migrant and multicultural communities may **blend or adapt their cultural practices** to combine with 'British' norms and habits.
 - Cultural practices are **adapted over time** in response to migration, intermarriage, economic pressures, or exposure to other traditions
 - Cultural transmission can occur both vertically (across generations) and horizontally (between peers), **leading to dynamic and evolving identities**
- But cultural heritage also provides a sense of belonging and continuity, even as **specific practices evolve or become less frequent.**

“

“Where we're living at the moment, it's a mixture of families. Got some more Asian families, an African family, and then our neighbor just next to us is an old English lady.”

- Male, 45, British Pakistani, Muslim

“On a Sunday I would cook something, a big piece of fish or maybe a piece of brisket, something like that. I like a Jewish flavoured Sunday lunch.”

- Female, 43, Mixed, Jewish

“My mum would use seasonings you typically find in Black African households. But I would use more Caribbean seasonings, because my wife is Caribbean, whereas my parents are Nigerian.”

- Male, 48, Black British, Non-religious

”

03.

The role of culture within energy use, attitudes and behaviours

Affordability is a key influence on participants' energy use, attitudes and behaviours

Almost all participants in this research say that **cost** is their main consideration when making decisions about energy use at home:

- **Affordability:** Concerns around affordability can result in participants reducing their heating use to manage rising costs, sometimes wearing extra layers indoors or avoiding heating altogether.
- **Housing quality:** Poor quality housing, strongly linked to vulnerability (e.g. insulation, draughts, outdated heating systems), increase energy use and limits comfort.
- **Renting:** Those renting have less control over their energy use (e.g. choosing appliances, improving insulation, exploring alternative energy solutions). Participants describe feeling "stuck" with older, inefficient systems that make managing costs harder.

This **reinforces existing evidence** on the primary role that affordability plays in shaping gas consumers' needs and behaviours – and the importance of considering **intersectional vulnerability** as a key lens for consumer support and engagement.

“

"Our house is not very energy efficient. When you turn [the heating] off within half an hour you're cold again. But also financially, you don't want to be turning it on all the time."

- Female, 51, European Chinese, Non-religious

"Since the cost-of-living crisis everything's expensive. Gas is expensive. Energy is expensive. My brother's neighbour, she's 70 years old and she won't switch on the heating."

- Female, 37, British Pakistani, Muslim

”

However, culture does play some role in shaping energy attitudes and behaviours

 **Cultural heritage**, such as religious teachings, and broader **social environment** influences can directly inform energy attitudes.



Some participants say their **religious or cultural values**, such as **Islamic** teachings against wastefulness or **Jewish** concepts of responsibility, directly influence their energy behaviours.



Fitting within our broader definition of culture, for others, **personal or family values** play a more indirect role, even though participants may not consciously identify these values as influencing them:

- **Upbringing and formative experiences** instil values around resourcefulness, recycling, and thriftiness, which influence attitudes and behaviours towards energy use.

“

“From our values perspective, we say don't be wasteful. It's a clear instruction for us from an Islamic point of view is to not be wasteful, whether it be water or anything like that, because it's a blessing.”

- Male, 27, British Pakistani, Muslim

“There are two warring points when it comes to my childhood and my energy usage. One is that I grew up with nothing and therefore I am terrified of spending things. The other is I grew up with nothing and therefore I hate being cold because I was always cold.”

- Female, 43, Mixed, Jewish

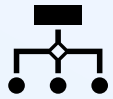
”

3.1

Cooking behaviours

Cooking habits reflect emotional attachments as well as wider cultural norms

Cooking is deeply intertwined with **emotional experiences, family traditions, and cultural heritage**, shaping food preparation routines and preferences. For example:



Cultural traditions

Religious celebrations, and special occasions are often marked by meaningful meals (e.g. Christmas for **Christian** participants, Ramadan/Eid for **Muslim** participants)



Social norms

Cooking is adaptive to social norms, with 2nd gen immigrants more likely to cook a mix of cultural and 'British' foods (e.g. a few **Asian** participants describe cooking 'Western' food for their children)



Family traditions

Cooking styles passed down in families can carry memories and emotional resonance. **Older** participants, or their older relatives, are more likely to cook from scratch more often

“

“So probably Christmas if anyone comes to visit, because, like, traditionally West Africa, then it's a thing of, like... for us, we feel like you have to kind of have food available... If someone came to visit you. So, for example, if I go to my mum's house, there would always be food there.”

- Female, 38, Black African British, Christian

“I get pizzas in for the grandkids if they want to cook some. But that kind of thing is more for them than us because we were brought up with home cooking.”

- Female, 82, White British, Christian

“My very first memories were being in my grandmother's kitchen. I still cook for Passover, and I still hear my grandmother's voice in my head trying to get me to put too much salt and sugar in everything.”

- Female, 43, Mixed, Jewish

”

Gas cooking is preferred by most, for both practical performance and cultural reasons

Cultural associations:

Participants from **South Asian** and **Caribbean** backgrounds see gas as an essential tool for preparing cultural dishes, such as jollof rice, stews, curries and chapatis.

Participants from **South Asian backgrounds**, associate gas with large-scale cooking of traditional dishes (e.g. for celebrations) and raise concerns that such **large-scale cooking and authentic results** would be much harder without gas as an option.

Habit: :

For a minority, particularly **White British** participants, gas is preferred due to **familiarity, ease, and perceived cooking quality**, rather than cultural associations.

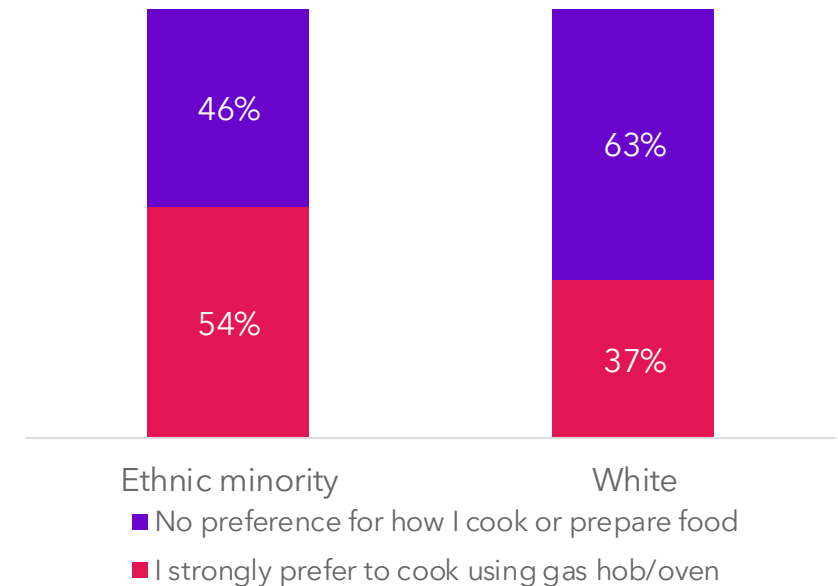
"I think we probably used the gas stove way more in Ramadan. There'd be loads of different food on there. So, there'd be like chickpeas and onion bhajis, pakoras, mosses. So, when if we're waking up at 3, 4 in the morning, we just warm it on the stove."

- Female, 23, British Bangladeshi, Muslim

"Induction feels like to me like an Easy Bake Oven. It's for people who can't cook. It's cooking for people who are afraid of fire. It's not about not being comfortable. It's about it being a less good option for cooking on."

- Female, 43, Mixed, Jewish

Cooking with gas % agreeing with statement



Ethnic minorities surveyed express stronger preference for **cooking with a gas hob/oven**, which they also use more frequently, compared with White respondents. The frequency of use is higher amongst Chinese and Pakistani respondents (84% and 85% respectively).

Q2: Which of the following statements do you most agree with? Base: All respondents. Ethnic Minority (n=345), White (n=1931)

Case study | Sunita*, British Asian Indian, Hindu

Sunita is 45 and lives with her husband and their two daughters

“

My parents were foodies, they used to host and entertain and make massive pots for lots of family. My mum would cook and our evening meal could contain four or five dishes!

”



A picture of Sunita's mum on the stove

Cooking habits

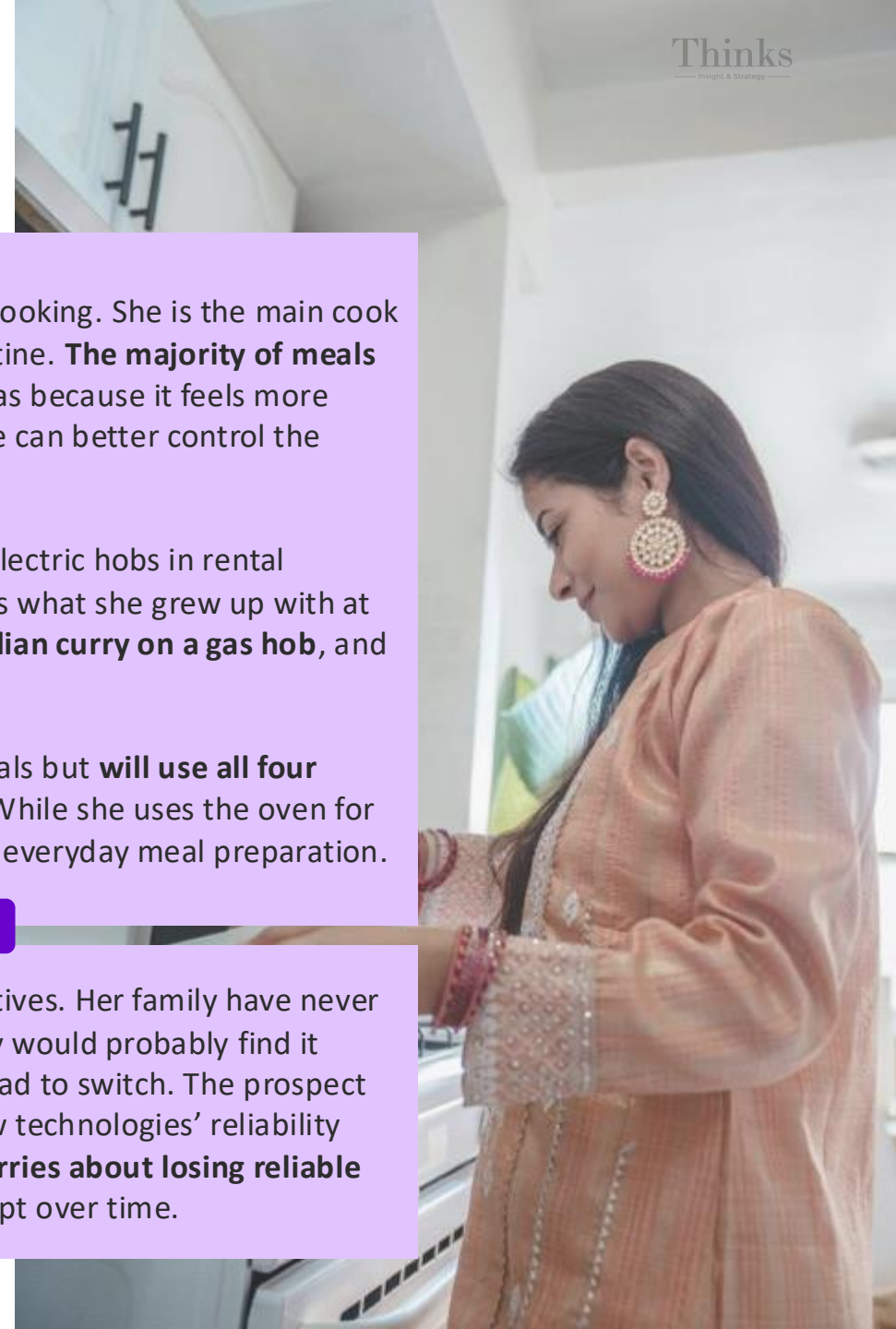
Sunita and her family rely heavily on the gas hob for daily cooking. She is the main cook and describes using the gas hob as core to her family's routine. **The majority of meals she makes are traditional Indian dishes**, and she prefers gas because it feels more intuitive: she likes being able to see the flame and feels she can better control the temperature.

These cooking habits are deeply rooted; Sunita has used electric hobs in rental apartments before but always preferred gas, because that's what she grew up with at home. **Her father taught her how to make a base of an Indian curry on a gas hob**, and so this feels natural.

Sunita generally uses two burners at once for everyday meals but **will use all four when cooking for family gatherings or special occasions**. While she uses the oven for roast dinners or fish dishes, the gas hob remains central to everyday meal preparation.

No gas scenario

Sunita has a strong preference for gas over electric alternatives. Her family have never had an electric hob or oven at home, and she believes they would probably find it **difficult to adapt her cultural cooking techniques** if they had to switch. The prospect of change makes her anxious due to uncertainty about new technologies' reliability and effectiveness compared to what she's used to. **She worries about losing reliable systems that work well** but acknowledges that people adapt over time.



3.2

Heating behaviours

Economic factors are key in shaping heating behaviours, across cultural backgrounds

Practical needs and affordability are often the first and foremost considerations when deciding how heating is used at home:



Household composition influences when and how heating is used. Those living alone tend to minimise heating use. Multi-generational households tend to keep heating on throughout the day



Affordability causes some participants to limit central heating use, wear more layers or avoid using alternatives like electric heaters as they are perceived to be inefficient



Family dynamics and routines mean heating routines shift over time. For example, retirees and home workers tend to use heating continuously, and those working outside the home rely more on timers

“

"I think as we've grown older and you know, with the cost-of-living crisis and when the energy crisis spiked up a lot, I think everyone did become a little bit more mindful."

- Female, 23, British Bangladeshi, Muslim

"We used to have the thermostat on around about 22°C continuously throughout the day. I realised after a while that we were using a lot of gas. The cost was quite high. So, I started turning it down to around about 20°C."

– Male, 48, Black British, Non-religious

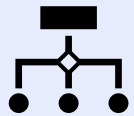
"No, it's not always on, I usually have it set to the timer. So, let's say I would set it up that it's off between 10 and 5pm in the nighttime, and then in the morning we switch it back on."

- Female, 47, White Eastern European, Non-religious

”

However, the ethnography shows that cultural heritage and family values do influence how 'comfort' is perceived

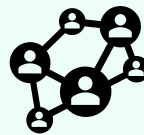
Perceptions of what '**comfortable**' or '**reasonable**' heating feels like are socially influenced, and vary between individuals, households and communities - what one participant considers 'limited' heating use, may be considered 'excessive' by another. However, certain factors do shape these attitudes:



Cultural attitudes such as strong hospitality values (e.g. **East and South Asian**) see guest comfort as a responsibility, overriding usual heating behaviours, with temperatures increased for guests



Family values can influence what is seen as a comfortable within the home e.g. one participant associates wood burners with family traditions and comfort, still using one despite perceiving it as inefficient



Social influences, such as current events can influence behaviour e.g. news on rising gas prices prompted several participants to change heating use even though they did not experience price increases themselves

“

“There is a big culture of us, you know, being good to our guests...if they feel uncomfortable, for example they're feeling cold, then we will turn on the heater.”

- Male, 27, British Pakistani, Muslim

“This house gets warm very quickly and we use a lot of the wood burning stove. So, in the winter we supplement. We don't have the heating on all of the time because I prefer it cool in the bedroom at night.”

– Female, 55, White British, Christian

“When [my daughter] was little, she had lung issues, so she had to be quite warm for that...But no, the rest of them walk around in the winter in their underwear glaring at me because they're too hot and they want me to stop it.”

- Female, 43, Mixed, Jewish

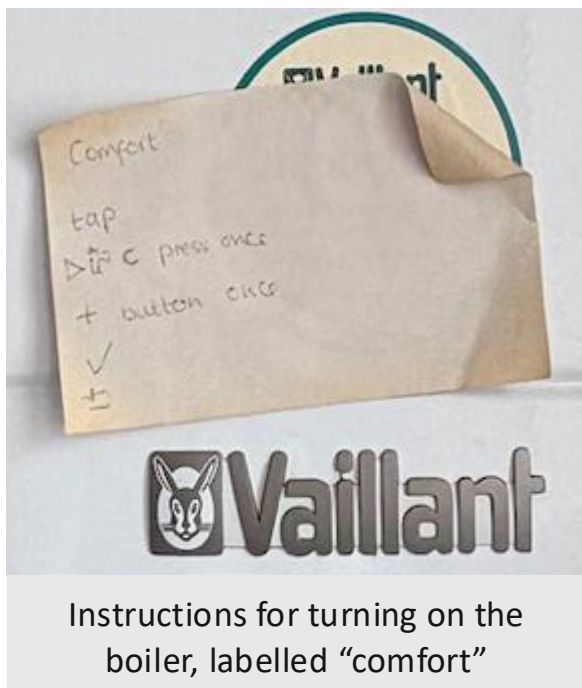
”

Case study | Nazeera*, British Bangladeshi, Muslim

Nazeera is 23 and lives with her parents and two siblings.

Heating habits

“ I can't lie, my mum puts the central heating on all the time... our house is constantly at 23-24 degrees, all the time. ”



Instructions for turning on the boiler, labelled “comfort”

Nazeera’s family primarily heat their home with gas central heating and **do not hesitate to turn it on when cold**. They also use electric blankets for extra warmth if needed, and recently even installed radiators in their conservatory so the room can be used year-round.

For Nazeera and her family, **comfort comes first**. Unlike some of her relatives or other families within the wider Bangladeshi community who she describes as being taught to layer up before turning on the heating, her immediate family has always switched it on without much restriction. She describes how visitors often comments that their house is “*roasting*,” but this level of warmth feels normal to them.

At the same time, Nazeera states that she **tries not to be wasteful**, a value passed down from her parents.. There are clearly **multiple, sometimes competing ideas at play**: while avoiding waste is important and culturally reinforced, comfort and looking after family (making sure they are all “*nice and warm together*”) is *also* culturally influenced, and tends to take priority for Nazeera’s family specifically.

No gas scenario

When asked about switching away from gas, **Nazeera’s main concerns are practical**: electrical heating would need to be as efficient as gas at keeping the house warm: “*electric heaters would cool down really quickly, so it’s a constant battle between on-off, on-off.*” Unless electric alternatives can match gas for efficiency, especially in maintaining consistent warmth, her family might struggle with a transition.



3.3

No gas scenario

Apprehension about a no gas scenario is most pronounced amongst South Asian participants - particularly in relation to cooking

Most participants expressed **initial feelings of fear and apprehension** at the prospect of losing gas.

- South Asian participants were most likely to say they have strong **cultural and emotional ties** to cooking overall, and fear losing authenticity, flavour, and traditional techniques.
- The control of heat via flame is viewed as essential for **specific dishes** such as chapatis, curries and chai (tea).
- Concerns are also raised about how the transition could affect **family and community dynamics** as gas is felt to be integral for religious celebrations and communal meals.

However, most participants ultimately **feel they could adapt** to a 'no gas' scenario, if they had to.

“

“Cooking would be a lot more difficult because obviously [electricity] is a lot more expensive, and then we wouldn't get the same taste in the curries and stuff.”

- Male, 45, British Pakistani, Muslim

“Gas is almost like a part of us since we've grown up with it and used it all our lives... it would be struggle to change away from it and change our attitudes now.”

- Male, 53, Indian, Sikh

“It's to do with the cultural food that is so reliant on gas. If there is anything else that can achieve those exact results and it is much more beneficial for the environment, then I don't think it'd be an issue.”

- Male, 27, British Pakistani, Muslim

”

Pen portrait | Imran*, British Pakistani, Muslim

Imran is 45 and lives with his wife and their daughter.

Cultural aspects

Imran and his wife take turns cooking and try to eat together most evenings before his night shifts. He describes **gas as integral to preparing traditional meals, especially curries**. He emphasises the importance of the open flame and ability to control the heat this way, and **doubts that electric would offer a suitable alternative** - "I don't know if electric can do that."

Financial concerns

Imran also expressed concerns about **the financial element of a potential no gas scenario**. He believes that electric is more expensive, particularly for cooking: "If you go on electric then your bill will go up." While apprehensive, he suggests that **adaptation might be possible if necessary**.



Pen portrait | John*, British Chinese, Christian

John is 46 and lives alone, but his teenage son and daughter stay regularly.

Cultural aspects

John cooks both traditional Chinese dishes and Western meals for himself and his children. **For traditional meals, he describes using a wok and specific techniques**, but demonstrates **openness to adapting these practices** to new technologies like induction hobs: "So the technique is slightly different when you have the gas hob... With induction, it gets hot so quickly... you want to make sure it's not overheating the food and then you just flip it over."

Financial concerns

John is aware that gas is cheaper than electric and factors this into his decisions, but he still chooses to adapt for reasons of convenience and maintenance. He points out that **a cost advantage of electric is not having to pay for servicing**.



Adaptive



Apprehensive



04.

Culture and attitudes to finances and bills

“

"I want everything to be as cost effective as possible. It's not cost effective to have crappy windows and a crappy boiler that's constantly on the go because it's just costing me too much money. Whereas now that even though we've paid a lot of money for both things, we know that we're as efficient as we can be."

- Male, 28, British Pakistani, Muslim

"I think some people may be very particular they will be like "oh we can only have the heating on for one hour per day because of the cost. But for someone like myself, even if I stopped working, I would just carry on with my normal routine because I think these [heating] are essential."

- Male, 46, British Chinese, Christian

”

Energy-saving decisions are mainly influenced by a desire to save cost, but can overlap with cultural attitudes of 'frugality'

The ethnography highlights that cost is key when it comes to making decisions about energy use and efficiency improvements:

- **Asian** participants are most likely to engage in energy-saving behaviours, primarily driven by a desire to keep costs down. A few mention cost-related cultural norms linked to 'frugality' such as layering up before turning the heating.

There are examples where comfort is prioritised over cost. Though this is not consistent across participants; some indicative differences were observed:

- **Elderly family members** tend to prioritise comfort, while younger generations are more cost-conscious, regardless of cultural background
- **African** participants are more likely to cite retaining their childhood family routines, using the heating as needed regardless of costs.
- Some **Bangladeshi and Pakistani** participants place a high importance on maintaining comfort as an essential need, with cost savings being secondary.

Several participants, particularly those from South Asian backgrounds, feel their financial attitudes are shaped by cultural norms

While **practical needs and cost-saving are key motivators**, attitudes to finances and bills are also shaped by family background, upbringing, cultural norms and values:



Family background and upbringing

Some participants identify as 'frugal' or 'a spender' and feel their attitudes towards finances are closely tied to how they were raised, with spending and saving habits instilled from an early age.

- **Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi** participants often cite parental influence on their financial attitudes, either adopting careful spending habits from their parent's hard work / migration experiences and frugality. However, this also leads some to spend more freely in reaction to a modest upbringing.



Cultural norms and values

A minority of participants explicitly mention cultural norms that influence how they spend and save money and feel their attitudes are similar to others in their culture.

- **Indian (Hindu/Sikh)** participants cite 'norms' in their culture to have money saved up for emergencies, e.g. needing to travel to India, car break down or a medical emergency in the family. They feel others in their culture value savings and careful spending similarly.
- **Pakistani (Muslim)** participants describe how hospitality values may mean they spend more when hosting guests to ensure they are comfortable e.g. putting heating on or cooking multiple dishes (particularly when breaking fast during Ramadan).

“

“So, you have money saving, that’s a big thing with us, with all India, everybody I know. They have to have some money saved up for just in case.”

- Female, 37, British Pakistani, Muslim

“In my house, it’s always been the case that my mum and dad are the ones that are responsible for [paying] everything. They’ve never put like their financial kind of stresses on us.”

- Female, 23, British Bangladeshi, Muslim

”

Case study | Sana*, British Pakistani, Muslim

Sana is 37 and lives with her husband and three children.

Approach to finances

Sana and her husband **share responsibility for managing household finances**. Currently, her husband pays the bills while Sana saves for their home extension project. They discuss financial decisions together, with her husband periodically reviewing energy deals and switching suppliers if he finds a better option, though this isn't often.

Sana describes **money saving as a “big thing” in her community**: “*with all Indians, everyone I know, they have some money saved up for just in case.*” She emphasises the importance of having emergency savings due to concerns about healthcare costs or unexpected expenses.

Influence on energy and gas use

Despite this, energy use in Sana's home is **driven by comfort and necessity rather than strict cost-saving or environmental motivations**. She keeps the heating on continuously during winter at around 18.5-19 degrees as her medical condition means she feels cold quickly and cannot function without warmth. Her family agrees on keeping the house warm – **she feels fortunate that her husband supports running the heating all day, even though he is aware of the cost.**

Although Sana acknowledges environmental concerns, and discussions about food waste and recycling sometimes come up at mosque, her **main priority is meeting her family's needs efficiently and comfortably.**

“*At the moment he's paying for everything and I'm saving up.*”

“*I'm so lucky because I've seen a lot of houses because of how the energy rates are, you can't do switch on heating. But with me, I know I cannot survive without it.*”

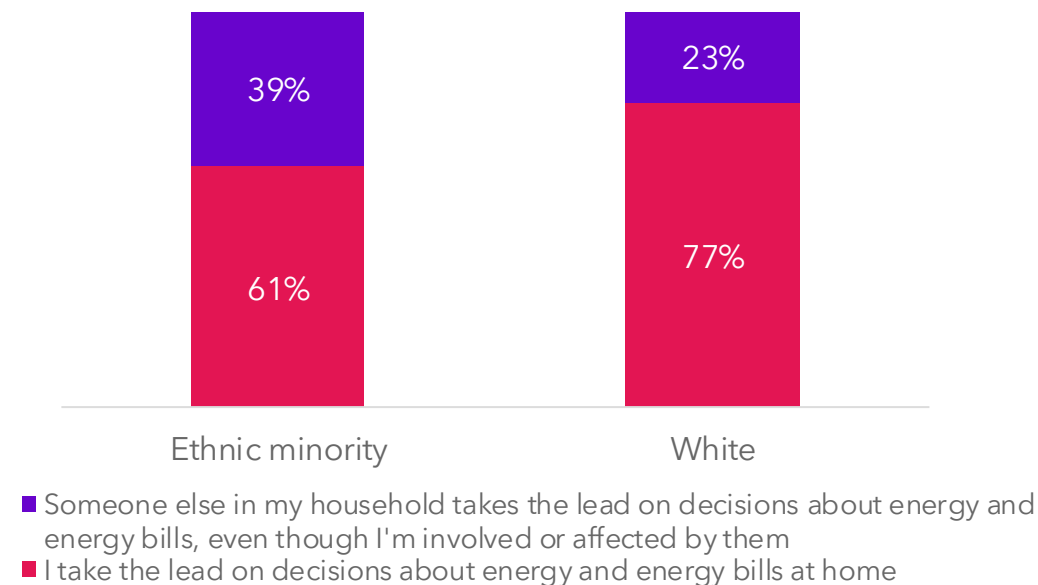
“*I'm proactive where I can be, and then... if we had to spend 500 on heating in a month, it happens, because winter is cold and you need it. So we don't hold back either.*”

The evidence review indicated differences in who makes energy decisions in the home across cultural groups

There is some evidence for this amongst South Asian and Muslim participants in the ethnography:

- Several Muslim and Asian participants said the **father or husband was responsible for paying the bills** and organising servicing.
- However, **culture was only referenced as the main influence for this decision by one participant**. For others, this was due more to personal circumstances (e.g. the mother not speaking English, or the wife saving for household renovations).

Energy decision-making
% agreeing with statement



In the omnibus survey, ethnic minority respondents are **less likely to take the lead on energy decisions** in the home. Ethnic minority respondents surveyed are **younger** than White respondents (57% vs. 22% aged 18-34) and more likely to be **single** (44% vs. 28%). This suggests many may be still living with parents or in **multi-generational households**.

Q2: Which of the following statements do you most agree with? Base: All respondents. Ethnic Minority (n=345), White (n=1931)

05.

Culture and sustainability

While the evidence review suggested that ethnic minorities are more open to sustainable behaviour changes, the ethnography indicated variation across and within groups

The evidence review stated:

- Research by the Centre for Climate Change and Social Transformations found that net **support for climate policies was significantly higher** for those from an ethnic minority group¹.
 - **59% of ethnic minority respondents believed their personal actions can help tackle climate change**, compared to 40% of white respondents in the UK¹.
- Thinks research for Cadent (Energy Diaries, 2024) shows that consumers from ethnic minority groups are **more likely to say they are open to engaging in sustainable behaviours** in the future².

But in the ethnography, engagement with sustainability was mixed both within and across cultural groups.

Almost all participants said that sustainability is an important and challenging issue to address. Generational differences were shown to have the biggest variance:

- **Older participants**, in particular, expressed scepticism about the effectiveness of individual actions and the overall impact of sustainability efforts.
- **Younger participants** and those with young children are more likely to feel motivated to act sustainably, due to a desire to care for nature and future generations

1. CAST (Centre for Climate Change and Social Transformations), 2024. Ethnicity and UK climate perceptions: Why we need greater diversity in engagement and research. UK.

2. Thinks Insight & Strategy, 2024. Energy Diaries 2024: Research for Cadent. UK.

However, this research did highlight some connection between sustainable behaviours and religious beliefs

25%

Of all ethnic minority respondents agree that *their religion / faith impacts their views on sustainability* vs. 11% of all white respondents

52%

Of all ethnic minority respondents agree that *their religion / faith makes them feel more responsible for the planet* vs. 16% of all white respondents

56%

Of all ethnic minority respondents agree that *their religion / faith, or its leaders, teaches them to protect the planet and they embrace this* vs. 17% of all white respondents

Ethnography participants, especially **practicing Muslims and Christians**, see sustainability as a **moral duty**, often shaped by specific **religious teachings**.

However, religious motivations are less frequently associated with **energy saving behaviours** and are more likely to translate into **protecting animal rights, water conservation, and reducing food waste**.

"We have a belief, if I plant a tree today, if it grows big, anything that benefits from it, be it bees or birds or anyone, I'll be rewarded... In our religion, we know that we will be accountable [for wastage]. There's lots of people that are going hungry and we are chucking food away."

- Female, 37, British Pakistani, Muslim

"From Islamic tradition, we do have a moral duty to be kind to animals and plants, etc. From an Islamic point of view, when Muslims would go to war with other nations there were certain moral rules. One of them is if you come across a town with trees you cannot cut them down."

- Male, 27, British Pakistani, Muslim

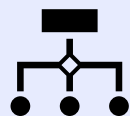
Generational and migration histories can also influence how sustainability behaviours are practiced

Learnt and practiced sustainability behaviours are often influenced by upbringing, broader social norms, and generational exposure:



Generational differences:

Younger participants are more likely to report actively sustainable behaviours (e.g. composting, veganism). However, older participants also describe maintaining less 'wasteful' habits from their upbringing



Migration history Those who have witnessed poverty in other countries report feeling more conscious of food waste. Those who have migrated are more likely to have adopted recycling behaviours only after arriving in the UK



Learned behaviour

Learning about climate change from news / documentaries, and from children raised in the UK, has prompted some participants to be more sustainable (e.g. compared to when they lived in other countries)

“

“People didn't have much money; we didn't even have carpets then... The rag and bone man came by horse and cart. People didn't have anything, so there was no waste really.”

- Female, 82, White British, Christian

“I'm from Sierra Leone and we went there in 2015, and we went past this place where essentially it was just like a dumping ground...and I think about that and I'm just like, no I don't want where I live to be like that.”

- Female, 38, Black African British, Christian

“I never thought about it until obviously Greta Thunberg got on a microphone and we obviously realised. I mean my daughter, said it's been something that was discussed in school years ago and I was like, I never heard about this before.”

- Male, 53, Indian, Sikh

”

Case study, religious | Shahbaz*, British Pakistani, Muslim

Shahbaz is 27 and lives with his parents.

Approach to sustainability

As a practicing Muslim, Shahbaz's approach to sustainability is **deeply rooted in his faith**. He describes **not being wasteful as a clear instruction from Islam**, which teaches "*don't be wasteful, whether it be water or anything like that, because it's a blessing*". He also cites **broader Islamic teaches about stewardship**, in which caring for animals and plants is seen as part of the moral responsibility, and he references **stories from Islamic tradition about planting trees even in difficult times** as examples of this ethic.

Influence on energy and gas use

In daily life, Shahbaz and his family are **mindful of their energy use**, adjusting heating only when needed, layering up with blankets before turning on electric heaters, and **using gas primarily for essential cooking tasks like preparing traditional stews and curries**. These practical choices reflect both a desire to avoid waste and an ongoing effort to improve efficiency at home, and he describes them as becoming "*second nature*".

Shahbaz **responded positively to news headlines about religious leaders advocating for solutions to climate change**. His attitudes and behaviours in terms of sustainability are strongly influenced by his faith. For him, protecting the planet means **not wasting things, avoiding extravagance and ensuring there's growth or renewable where possible**.

There is an emphasis on the respecting the environment and taking care of it... it's important for us to be mindful of the environment and protect the planet, basically.

Sustainability is... not going overboard and making measures that there is some sort of regrowth of the resources that you use up.



Thank you

Thinks Insight & Strategy
West Wing
Somerset House
London
WC2R 1LA
United Kingdom

T: +44 (0)20 7845 5880
www.thinksinsight.com