



Highlights

Experiences of Energy Consumption for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities

August 2016

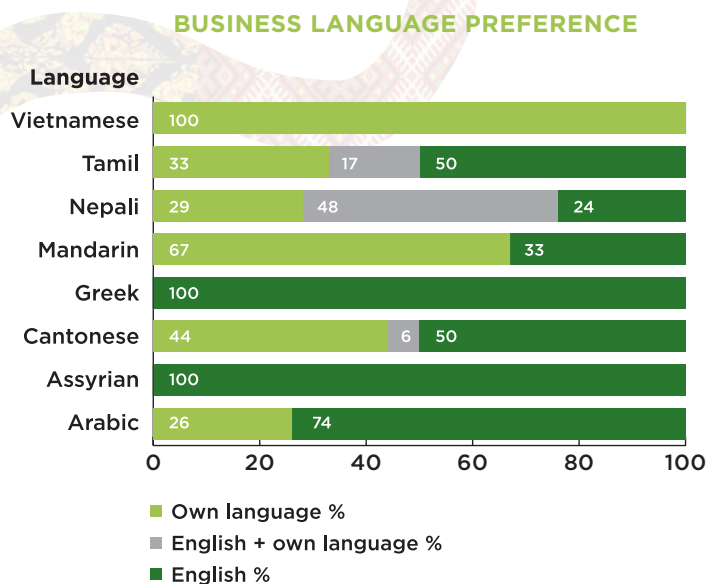
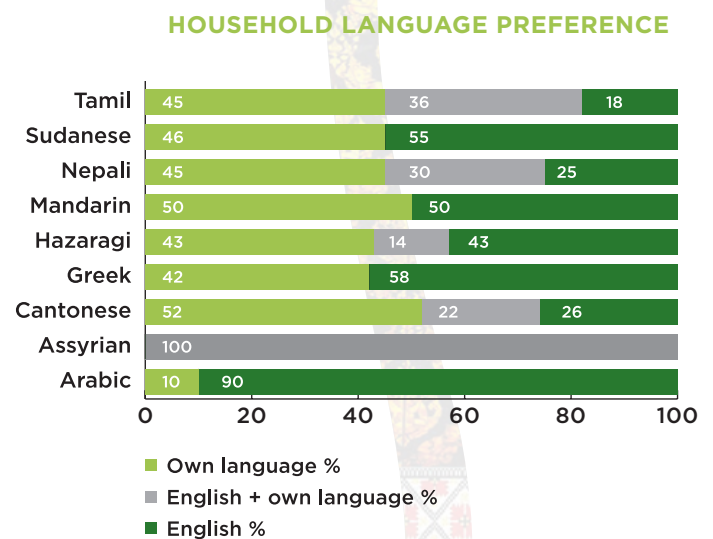


ECC NSW surveyed 145 households in 10 different languages, and 83 small businesses in 8 languages in NSW and Victoria, to understand those consumers' experiences and concerns.

What we found

- They prefer communication in their first language;
- their energy literacy is poor;
- they need help from retailers to understand and participate in the energy market;
- industry, government and regulators need to help ensure that CALD consumers are not left behind in accessing new energy technologies; and
- low income consumers are not accessing payment assistance, despite being over represented in the lowest income groupings.

How CALD consumers want to receive information

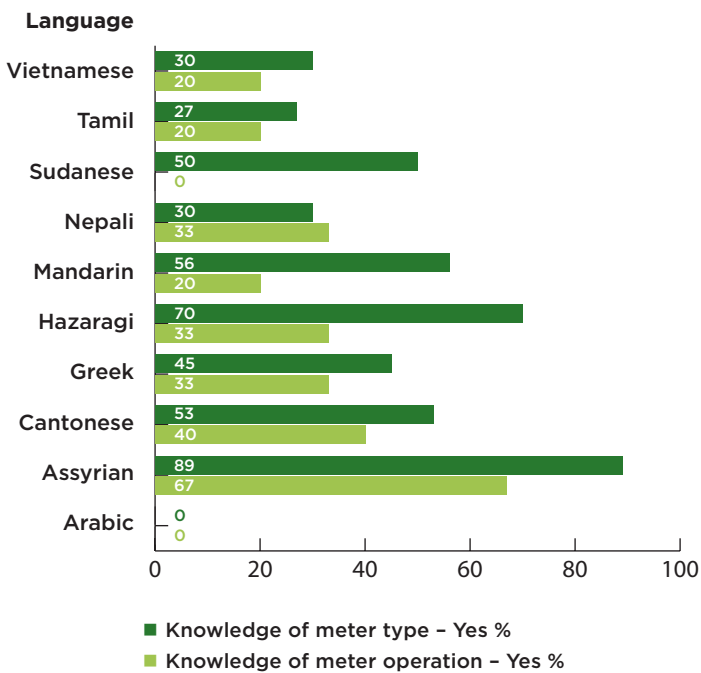


Improving energy literacy - CALD households

Amongst all groups, household energy literacy improved since our 2011/12 survey (from 70% knowing their supplier in 2011/12, to over 80% in 2015/16). Not surprisingly, consumers who are newly arrived in Australia know less and are less active in the energy market.

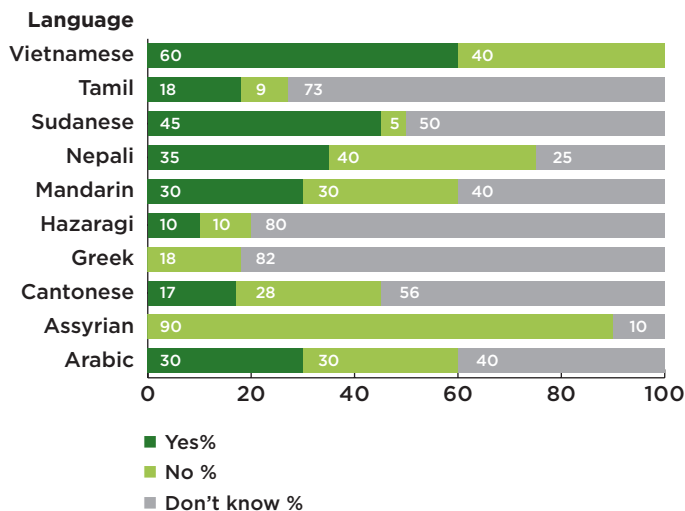
To see whether CALD households had the knowledge necessary to understand more complicated energy products, we asked them about their meters.

KNOWLEDGE OF METER TYPE AND METER OPERATION



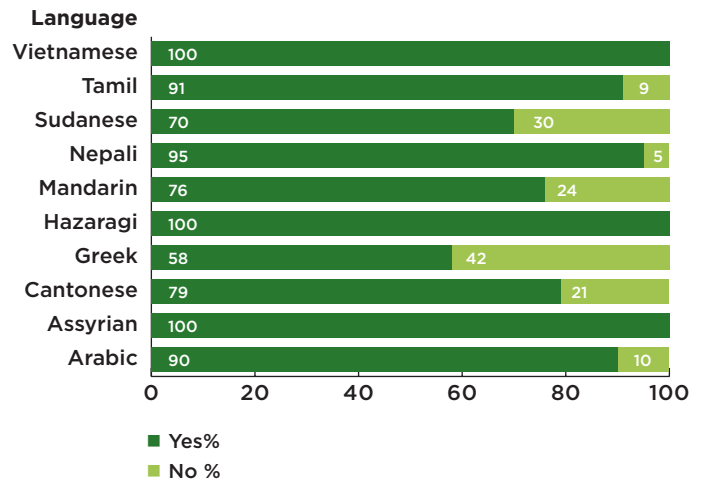
We also asked about their energy tariffs, and found some surprising results, between communities and between NSW and Victoria.

KNOWLEDGE OF TARIFF TYPE



In relation to energy efficiency, most considered they understood what they needed to do, but – compared to 2011/12 – a primary motivator is now environmental. There was considerable diversity across language groups and between States.

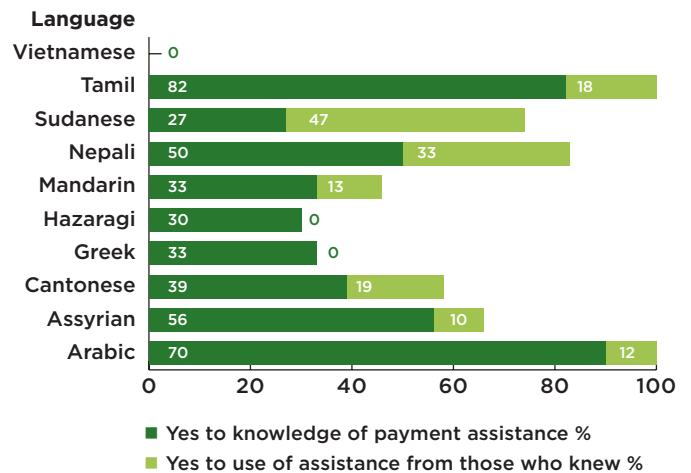
KNOWLEDGE OF ENERGY EFFICIENCY



Failing to access payment assistance

We are concerned that while many knew about the opportunity for assistance, very few had used it. CALD communities are over represented in the ABS lowest income groups.

KNOWLEDGE AND USE OF PAYMENT ASSISTANCE



Improving energy literacy - CALD Business

The survey asked businesses to describe their understanding of their electricity bill, again finding differences between communities. Interestingly, almost all of the language groups (88%) knew the costs of energy from their bill except for the Greek businesses in Victoria, where none of them knew.

Businesses' energy literacy was higher than households – around half the businesses surveyed knew what type of meter they had, but only 33% understood what that meant.

Only 22% of NSW respondents understood their meter, compared to around 50% in Victoria.

EASE WITH BILL

Language	Very easy	OK	Bit difficult	Very difficult	Did not look	Unsure
Vietnamese	0	20	20	0	0	60
Tamil	0	29	57	0	0	14
Nepali	19	76	5	0	0	0
Mandarin	0	67	0	0	0	33
Greek	0	33	0	0	33	33
Cantonese	6	38	31	0	6	19
Assyrian	0	0	100	0	0	0
Arabic	5	42	37	16	0	0

Of significant concern is that over 20% of business owners did not know their tariff type. We found different levels of understanding between States – 58% in NSW knew they were on a Time of Use (TOU) tariff, compared to 48% in Victoria.

Participation in the energy market

Communities have different levels of engagement in the energy market. We compared our survey results with recent AEMC research into the effectiveness of retail competition, finding some surprising differences.

The reasons given by CALD households who considered switching retailers but didn't, were similar to the AEMC findings. Our results are similar to those reported by Newgate with 10% stating *too confusing*, 43% *lack of value in change* and 29% *happy with current supplier*. As expected a higher number of CALD consumers did not understand the offer.

19% of businesses had changed supplier in the last year, although there were differences between language groups.

Most business owners in both States knew their electricity supplier and more in Victoria than NSW business owners knew their gas supplier. There has not been a great deal of change over time in businesses choosing their supplier.

- In the 2011/12 research less than 50% had chosen their electricity supplier however the majority had chosen their gas supplier.
- In the current research the majority had chosen their electricity and gas supplier.

HOUSEHOLDS CHANGING ELECTRICITY SUPPLIER IN LAST 12 MONTHS

Language	Yes %	No %
Vietnamese	0	100
Tamil	64	36
Sudanese	9	91
Nepali	15	85
Mandarin	6	94
Hazaragi	10	90
Greek	17	83
Cantonese	16	84
Assyrian	40	60
Arabic	30	70

■ Below AEMC results ■ Above AEMC results

- The main reason for their choice in the earlier research was costs or discounts and again this was the main reason in the 2015/16 research except for the Cantonese, who when choosing gas supplier, reported that friends and family were the main reason for their choice.

Assyrian, Nepali, Arabic and Tamil-speaking business owners reported that almost 100% had contacted the suppliers to question their bill, compared to none of the Greek, Mandarin and Vietnamese speaking business owners. In comparison, high numbers of Greek and all of the Mandarin speaking business owners had discussed contracts and charges with suppliers.

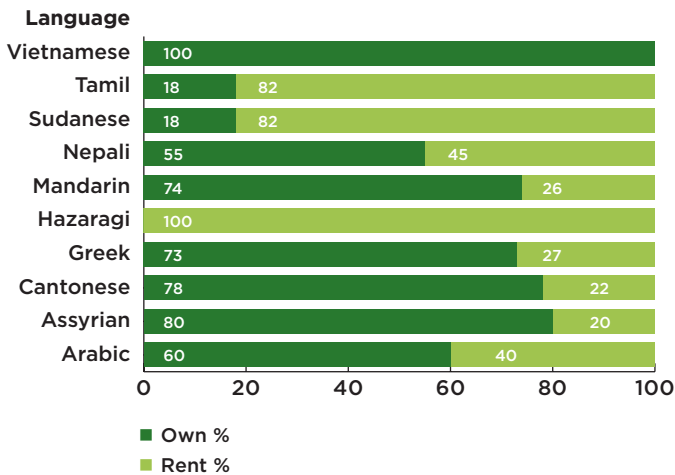
HOUSEHOLDS – REASONS FOR NO RETAILER CHANGE

Language	Not a better deal %	Loyalty to company %	Did not understand deal %	Did not know what to do %	Other %
Vietnamese	80	50	0	0	0
Tamil	25	0	0	0	75
Sudanese	29	48	19	0	5
Nepali	67	13	20	0	0
Mandarin	56	17	22	0	12
Hazaragi	40	0	30	20	10
Greek	50	25	0	0	25
Cantonese	41	20	34	0	20
Assyrian	100	0	0	0	0
Arabic	29	29	14	0	29

Accessing new technologies

There was considerable variation in home ownership across language groups, mostly related to length of time in Australia.

HOME OWNERSHIP/RENTAL



Approximately 10% of CALD homeowners in NSW and 5.5% in Victoria had solar PV. We asked households whether they'd received offers to install PV – as the most widely used new technology – and were surprised at the low level of engagement from industry.

CALD HOUSEHOLDS - NEW PRODUCTS AND SERVICES OFFERS (%YES)

Language	Solar PV %	Storage %	Package %
Vietnamese	20	0	0
Tamil	0	0	0
Sudanese	5	0	0
Nepali	12	0	0
Mandarin	27	0	9
Hazaragi	0	0	0
Greek	33	0	0
Cantonese	19	0	0
Assyrian	40	0	0
Arabic	33	14	12

Business engagement was even lower – although an average of 6% have been offered PV, only 2 businesses (1 Cantonese and 1 Vietnamese business) owned PV panels.

CALD BUSINESSES - NEW PRODUCTS AND SERVICES OFFERS (%YES)

Language	Solar PV %	Storage %	Package %
Vietnamese	10	0	0
Tamil	0	0	0
Nepali	0	0	0
Mandarin	33	0	0
Greek	25	25	25
Cantonese	0	0	0
Assyrian	0	0	0
Arabic	0	0	0

The ECC will use this work to:

- act with government and the energy industry to improve energy literacy of CALD energy consumers to facilitate their access and participation in the energy market and new technologies
- pursue further research to answer why CALD consumers are not accessing payment assistance.

The diversity of responses between language groups reinforces the need to engage households and business CALD consumers. ECC's *Cultural Connections: Engaging CALD energy consumers* provides guidance to the energy industry and government on how to reach those customers.

Survey methodology

In 2011/12, we found that CALD households and businesses did not understand the changes in the energy retail market. We asked the same questions in 2015/16, as well as investigating how CALD consumers were accessing new and emerging technologies and services. We expanded the survey to Victoria as well as NSW, to identify any differences between States.

Survey data was collected by bilingual energy researchers in their communities, in language. The survey respondents consisted of 145 households in 10 different languages and 83 small businesses in 8 languages in NSW and Victoria.

About ECC NSW

The Ethnic Communities' Council of NSW (ECC) is the peak body for all culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities in NSW with a mission to promote the principles of multiculturalism and work towards the further development of a culturally inclusive society.

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Cultural Connections: Engaging CALD energy consumers can be downloaded from:
www.eccnsw.org.au/What-we-do/Advocacy/Guidelines.aspx