

Domestic Energy Use

Overall Energy Used

In the UK, the domestic sector accounts for 31% of all primary energy consumption. Primary energy consumption is a measure that takes account of all of the losses in energy delivery, so instead of measuring the electricity used in the house, it measures the amount of fuel that would have been needed to generate the electricity.

Primary energy is usually quoted in million tonnes of oil equivalent (mtoe). This is the weight of oil that has the same energy content. In 2000 the total energy used in UK households was equivalent to 47 million tonnes of oil.

There are some 25 million households in the UK, so on average each consumes just under 2 tonnes of oil every year, and is responsible for 6 tonnes of carbon dioxide going into the atmosphere.

What is it used for?

The chart shows the breakdown of how the energy is used in the house.

Most is used for heating the home. Despite improvements in house insulation and in the efficiency of boiler systems, the overall energy used in the UK for space heating has increased. This is because of an increase in the number of houses, an increase in the proportion with central heating and also because people keep their houses warmer.

The overall use of energy to provide hot water has increased very slightly between 1970 and 2000, while energy used for cooking has fallen a little, or rather transferred to the industrial sector with the increased use of convenience meals.

Energy used for lighting and appliances is two and a half times higher in 2000 than it was in 1970. This is due to a number of factors:

- An increased number of households
- A trend towards multiple sources of lighting rather than a single ceiling light.
- An increase in the number of electrical goods households own – microwave ovens, PCs and DVD players weren't available in 1970.
- Standby mode – this accounts for 6% of all domestic electricity consumption! Turning things off at the switch rather than the remote will save money.

Other factors have reduced the size of the increase, such as the growing use of low energy bulbs, and improvements to the energy efficiency of new fridges and freezers, which use only three quarters of the energy they did in 1970.

