

Consumer Insight Report

Spring 2026

Headline Insights



Executive Summary



This first edition of the AMDEA Quarterly Consumer Insight Report sets out to understand how UK consumers currently feel about home appliances. At a time when households are dealing with ongoing cost pressures alongside rapid technological change, having a clear view of public priorities matters for both industry and policymakers.

The domestic appliance sector is changing, influenced by the transition to net zero and the growing role of digital technology in everyday life. But progress depends on how consumers respond.

This research is based on a nationally representative sample of 2,000 UK adults. It looks at attitudes to technology, the impact of the cost of living and views on sustainability. The findings point to a clear set of priorities: consumers want durability, reliability and straightforward information; they don't want excessive product labelling. Innovation needs to be balanced with simplicity and practicality. Technology has a role to play, but it must solve real problems and deliver obvious benefits.

For the appliance industry, this report highlights the need for coherent communication and consumer engagement. For Government and regulators, it provides evidence that policy needs to reflect how people actually live. Requirements that introduce multiple, overlapping labelling schemes risk creating confusion rather than clarity.

Consumers are not passive. They make informed choices based on their needs, budgets and experiences. AMDEA is committed to understanding those choices and ensuring that the consumer perspective is properly represented. As we move towards a more sustainable future for appliances, this quarterly barometer will track how attitudes evolve over time and help identify meaningful changes in behaviour and priorities.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stefan Hay". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stefan Hay
Chief Executive Officer
April 2026

The logo for AMDEA, consisting of the letters "AMDEA" in a bold, orange, sans-serif font. The letters are spaced out and have a slight shadow effect.

1. AI & Smart Appliances

AI and connected technology are changing the domestic appliance sector. Manufacturers are developing products that can optimise energy and water use, flag issues before they become serious problems and connect with wider smart home systems. It potentially brings great benefits for consumers, energy networks and the environment. But our research shows a mismatch between what technology can do and how it is viewed by the public. Where connected features are used, they tend to be the simplest ones. Basic remote control is the most common example, used by 16.2% of respondents. This usually means straightforward actions such as starting or stopping a cycle or getting a notification when it has finished.

The Generational Divide

There is a clear generational divide in how people engage with technology. **Younger consumers, particularly those under 35, are unsurprisingly leading the way when it comes to adoption.** Having grown up with digital technology, they are far more comfortable using apps, connected devices and automated features. Just over half (52%) say they trust appliances that can diagnose faults and alert them or the manufacturer directly.

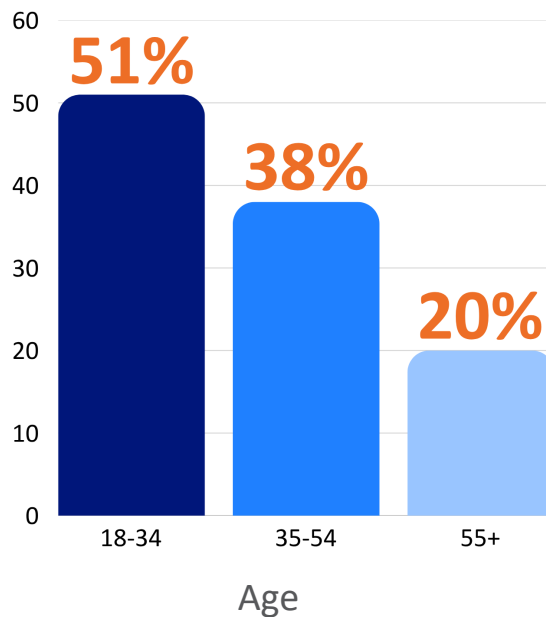


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For this group, smart features are often seen as a normal part of a product, although we can see from the data that features still need to be easy to use and clearly useful.

The picture is very different among older consumers. Those aged over 55 are far less engaged with connected appliances; 67% say they do not own any smart devices at all. For many, physical controls such as dials and buttons are still preferred. They also have more concerns about complexity and about data privacy and security. The question here is not 'how do I connect this?' but rather 'why would I want to?'

We asked: Do you actively use the smart or tech features on your appliances? Percentage answering yes:



2. Repair & Sustainability

Durability is very important. **Over nine in 10 consumers (91.4%) say lifespan matters when making a purchase.** This is closely linked to the value placed on support after purchase. **Warranties are important to 87.9% of consumers,** showing a clear preference for brands that stand behind their products.



Being able to repair a product is also very important. Almost 85% say repairability matters and around 82% say they would compare the cost of repair against replacement before deciding what to do. There is a difference in how this plays out across age groups however, with younger consumers far more likely to attempt repairs themselves. **Around 67% of those aged 18 to 34 say they would try to fix a fault using online guidance or parts** compared to 38% of those aged over 55, who are more likely to use a professional.

Attempting repairs without the right knowledge carries real risks. Consumers must be aware that they can do simple maintenance, but more complex repairs remain the responsibility of qualified professionals. The advice is always to contact the manufacturer – they are the experts and can advise on repairs.

Disposal and Recycling

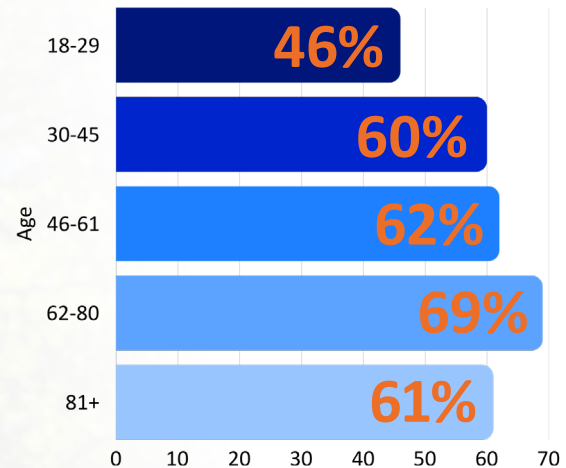
When it comes to small items like kettles, toasters or hair dryers, a throwaway mindset still dominates.

Almost seven in 10 consumers (69.9%) say it is easier to replace a small appliance than repair it.

This is contributing to the growing and costly Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE), one of the fastest rising waste streams in the UK.

There is also a clear gap in awareness when it comes to disposal. **Among under-30s, just 46% say they know how to recycle small appliances.** Providing convenient, accessible and well-publicised recycling solutions for SDAs must be a priority.

We asked: Do you know where to take a small appliance to be recycled? Percentage answering yes:



The Refurbished Opportunity

The data also points to a commercially attractive avenue for growth within the circular economy: the refurbished appliance market. **More than a third of consumers (34.8%) say they would consider buying a professionally refurbished appliance if it was available at a lower price.** This interest is consistent across age groups. The key factor is trust. Consumers are open to buying refurbished appliances, but only where there are clear assurances around safety, quality and reliability, backed by a warranty or recognised provider.

AMDEA Insight:

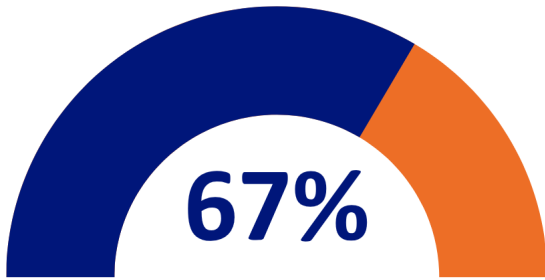
These findings support AMDEA's focus on the circular economy and show there is real and data-driven potential for a professionally refurbished market in the UK.

The data makes a clear case for AMDEA to support more targeted consumer education around small WEEE recycling, especially for younger consumers, who are currently the least aware of how to dispose of these products properly.

There is also a clear case for continuing to promote the value of professional repair over early replacement.

3. Cost of Living & Value Perception

The cost of living crisis continues to shape how households use their appliances. The Q1 report shows that over half (58.2%) of UK adults have changed how they use their appliances as a result. Households are washing at lower temperatures, only running appliances when fully loaded and making greater use of eco settings. Many are also paying closer attention to when they use energy, choosing off-peak times where possible. This behaviour is even more pronounced among younger consumers, rising to 67.2%.



of 18-34 year old respondents say rising costs have changed the way they have used appliances in the last 12 months

It makes the case for energy-efficient products stronger but the benefits must be clear if they are going to influence buying decisions. Despite ongoing pressure on household budgets, large domestic appliances are still seen as value for money: **74.7% of consumers rated items such as washing machines, fridge-freezers and ovens as good or excellent value** far outpacing other household tech like smart speakers (rated good value by 47.1% of consumers).

Price and Aesthetics

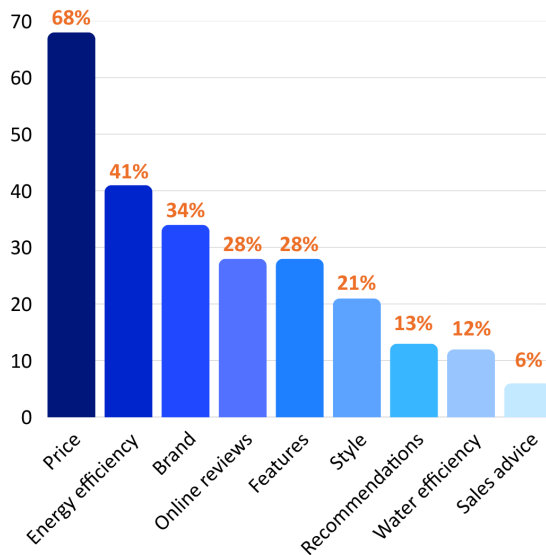
When it comes to choosing between similar new appliances, price is still the biggest influencing factor. Around two thirds of consumers (67.5%) say it plays the main role in their decision.

Other factors still matter, but they carry less weight. **Energy efficiency is important for 40.6% of consumers** and brand plays a role for 33.6%, with many people sticking to names they know and trust. That said, buying decisions are not purely practical. Appearance also plays a role; around one in five consumers (20.8%) say the look and design of an

appliance influences their choice, particularly when comparing products at a similar price.

Only 11.7% of consumers say water efficiency is a key driver, notably lower than those influenced by design. This has implications for policy. Measures such as water efficiency labelling need to be carefully considered, particularly if they affect how products look or are presented. If labels are too prominent or restrictive, they risk clashing with what consumers value.

We asked: When choosing between similar home appliances, which of these have the most influence on your decision?



AMDEA Insight:

The data reinforces the idea that home appliances are essential, long-term purchases rather than items people expect to replace regularly. Appliances are not just chosen for what they do, but for how they fit into the home; appearance still plays a role in purchasing decisions.

This means regulations need to be carefully considered. If they restrict design too heavily or introduce large, intrusive labels, they risk clashing with what consumers value. In turn, that can make it harder to bring people with you on wider sustainability goals.

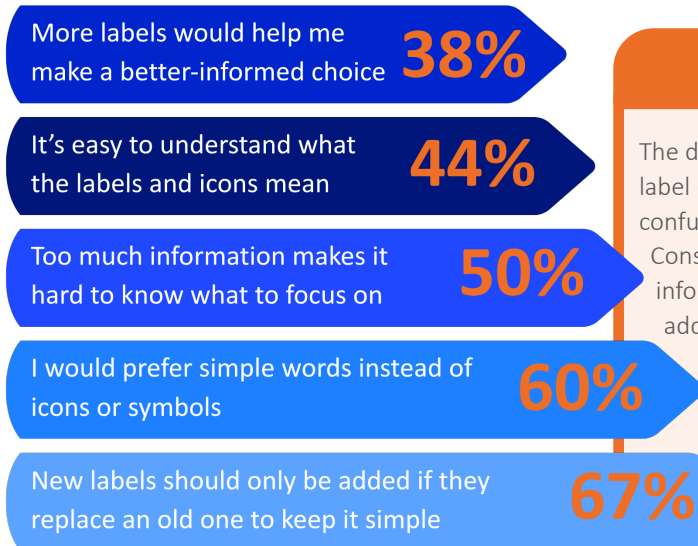
4. The Labelling Dilemma

A key challenge for the domestic appliance sector sits at the point of sale, where consumers are faced with a growing amount of information when choosing a product. Appliances already carry energy labels, technical data and safety markings, alongside a range of additional product information. The Q1 report shows that this is becoming harder for consumers to navigate.

Consumers are facing an information overload. **More than half (50.5%) say there is now so much information that it is difficult to know what to focus on.** Rather than helping decision-making, too many labels can have the opposite effect. When faced with multiple ratings, symbols and data points, consumers are more likely to simplify the process and focus on price.

There is clear resistance to adding further layers of labelling with **67.0% saying new labels should only be introduced if they replace existing ones.** The message is straightforward: consumers want clear, streamlined information, not more of it. How information is presented is just as important as how much is provided. The data shows a strong

We asked: When it comes to appliance labels, how much do you agree with the following statements?



preference for simple, descriptive language over technical symbols or rating systems. Around 60.5% of consumers say they would rather see clear wording, such as 'high efficiency', than interpret new icons or scales. This has direct implications for any future labelling proposals.

There is a stark contrast in consumer priorities: **energy efficiency is rated as a highly important purchasing factor for 41% of consumers but water efficiency is seen as a key driver by only 11.7%.**

This strongly supports the campaign stance against introducing a Mandatory Water Efficiency Labelling Scheme (MWELS), as it risks adding unnecessary confusion without aligning with consumer priorities. Simplification, consistency and clarity are likely to be more effective than adding further layers of detail.



Just **12%** of consumers say water efficiency influences purchasing decisions

AMDEA Insight:

The data shows that adding another standalone label (as has been proposed) is likely to increase confusion rather than improve decision-making. Consumers are already navigating a crowded information landscape. Introducing an additional label is unlikely to improve understanding or confidence. Overall, the message is clear: improving how information is presented will be more effective than simply adding more of it.

Conclusion: Spring 2026

The first AMDEA Consumer Insight Report for 2026 and these Headline Insights provide a clear picture of how UK households are approaching appliances today. Faced with ongoing cost pressures, consumers are focusing on what matters most: durability, value, simplicity and reliable support. The growing amount of information at point of sale is being questioned.

There is also a clear, balanced view on sustainability. Consumers support the direction of travel, whether through repair, energy-saving habits or interest in refurbished products. However, they are less receptive to measures that feel complicated or difficult to use in practice. The

expectation is simple: make sustainable choices clear, affordable and easy to act on.

For both industry and policymakers, the direction is clear. Products need to be designed with the user in mind, with a focus on ease of use and long-term reliability. Sustainability should continue to be built into the product itself through efficiency, durability and reparability, rather than relying on additional layers of labelling or complexity.

Looking ahead, AMDEA will continue to track these trends throughout 2026. This will include how cost pressures influence behaviour, how trust is gained across different age groups and how attitudes towards repair and refurbishment develop over time.



METHODOLOGY

This report is based on nationally representative research conducted by Opinium on behalf of AMDEA in Q1 2026. The research methodology employed a detailed online questionnaire developed in close collaboration with AMDEA.

The sample consists of 2,000 UK adults, weighted to ensure accurate representation across age, gender, geographic region and socio-economic status. This large sample size provides a high degree of statistical confidence and allows for granular analysis of demographic variations.

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