



Be Safe

Looking after **your** home

CORGI. The name you trust



Forward. Be safe – looking after **your home**

Bill Paton, **CORGI's Home Safety Expert** says:

Many research projects have looked into the **safety of home appliances.**

However, until now there has been a lot less emphasis on public opinion or general awareness of **how to ensure you have a safe home.**

Campaigners, such as the *Carbon Monoxide Consumer Awareness Alliance (COCAA)* and the *CO-Gas Safety Society*, have been pushing the government for years to increase spending on publicity to educate everyone on the dangers of Carbon Monoxide poisoning.

And from my experience, I have met far too many people who do not know how to protect their homes from gas escapes, or **what they should do in an emergency.**

This study, which was commissioned by Britain's home safety company, CORGI, is the **biggest and most comprehensive** analysis into how residents across the country view home safety. It also focuses on the perception of trades people, as well as the role of landlords, the importance of regular maintenance checks and how the economic downturn is affecting safety in the 20 million homes in Britain that use gas.

The report aims to be insightful, informative and up-to-date in order to boost the **public profile of home safety** and encourage everyone to keep their homes and families safe from Carbon Monoxide.



Bill has **20 years experience in the home safety industry**, 17 of which he spent as commercial director at Servowarm and then Homeserve which manufactured, designed and installed domestic boilers direct to the public.

Bill has **extensive customer service experience** having managed a domestic boiler engineer base of over 150. His notable achievements include introducing condensing boilers to the domestic market 20 years ago, before it was mandatory. He also created a training centre to recruit new operatives to the gas industry.

Bill also has **experience in domestic energy assessment** and the installation of renewable energy products and has designed heating systems that reflect both technical and life style requirements. He is a former Director of the Institute of Domestic Energy Assessors

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Methodology

CORGI, Britain's home safety company presents the 'Looking After Your Home' report, an in depth look at public perception and awareness of **safety in the home**.

The study consisted of a survey of **3166 UK adults** regarding their knowledge of safety requirements, their views of those responsible for keeping them safe, and how the economic downturn is influencing provision and education.

The respondents were made up of:

- 1309** homeowners
- 1006** tenants
- 692** living in social housing
- 9** living in student accommodation
- 124** living with parents
- 26** living in other circumstances.

Respondents were **spread across the country**, including the capital cities of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.



Key findings

- The majority of residents are still **concerned about the safety** in their home
- Many people in the UK still think **men should be in charge** of home safety
- There is a generally **poor perception** of how reliable trades people are
- A quarter of the population do **not trust their trades person** even though they have the necessary accreditation
- The economic downturn is putting **millions of homes in danger** as people increasingly try to cut costs by using unaccredited trades people or by attempting maintenance and repairs themselves instead
- UK residents are worried about gas safety in their homes and are particularly concerned about the **dangers of a faulty boiler**
- Despite widespread concern about gas safety, the maintenance of gas appliances is **widely neglected**
- A large proportion of the population do not know **basic information** about their gas appliances which could keep them safe, such as how old their boiler is or when it is due a safety inspection
- There is general confusion over what to **do in an emergency** or how to protect themselves against the threat of **Carbon Monoxide poisoning**
- **Young people** are particularly vulnerable as three quarters would not know what to do if they had a gas escape or if they did not have a valid safety certificate
- **Many landlords** are failing to provide tenants with the necessary gas safety information
- **The elderly** are most neglected by their landlords
- The **economic downturn** has resulted in many home owners putting even less importance on gas safety





Recommendations

- Intensification of **media focus** on the importance of home safety to educate and raise awareness
- Encourage residents to use **accredited trades professionals** by improving the public's image of them through the media and campaigns
- Maintain a **high profile** for home safety throughout the economic downturn
- Greater **scrutiny of landlords** with regards to their legal duty to provide their tenants with home safety information
- Promotion of **integrated home safety** combining the hazards of fire, domestic accidents and Carbon Monoxide
- More information in the public domain on the dangers of **Carbon Monoxide poisoning**, its symptoms and how to mitigate it
- Installation of a Carbon Monoxide **alarm** in every home in Britain



Chapter 1: How important is gas safety?

What are the main risks in the home?

We asked **3,166 UK residents** – homeowners, tenants, and social housing occupants - about their attitude towards home safety and in particular, the upkeep of gas appliances in their home.

Twenty million households in Great Britain use gas to heat their homes, cook their food and provide hot water. ¹

Faulty boilers are among the top three concerns of households in Britain, following only **fire hazards** and **faulty wiring**. Despite the destruction caused by floods across the UK in the past five years, respondents said they were still more worried about their gas boilers (13% vs. 22%) than any other natural threat such as floods to their home.

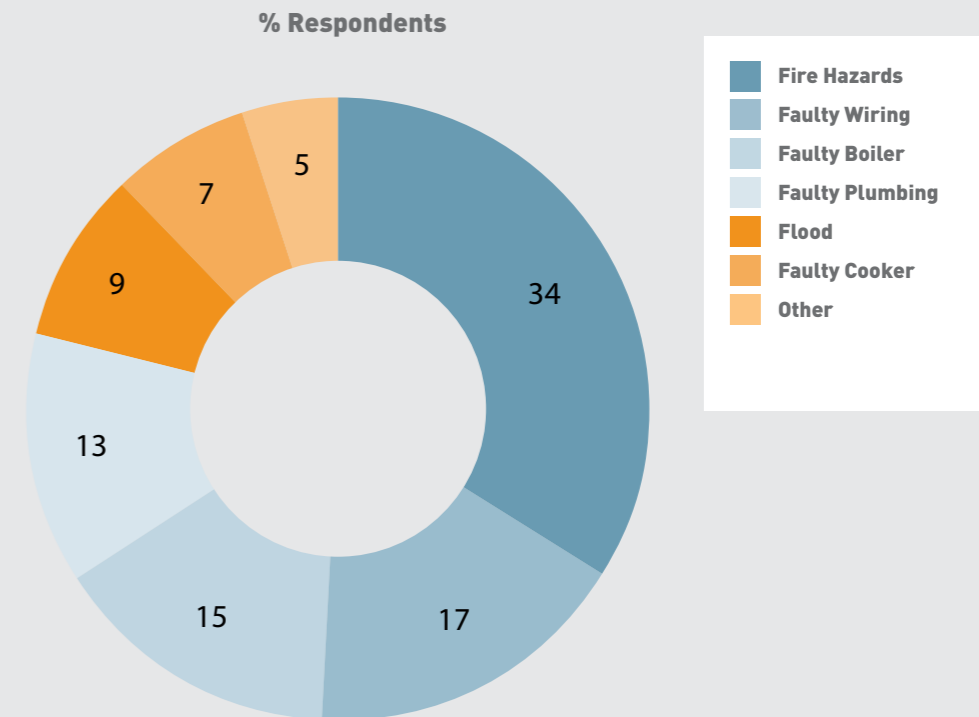


Figure 1. Top concerns for British households

¹ Health and Safety Executive's 'Gas safety review: options for change' www.hse.gov.uk/consult/disdocs/dde14b.pdf





"Many people across Britain are understandably **worried about the dangers** of Carbon Monoxide which can leak from poorly installed, maintained or serviced appliances and cause paralysis, brain damage or even death if inhaled.

"Carbon Monoxide cannot be seen, heard or smelt so the gas is often regarded as a **silent killer**. People need more information about how to avoid the threat of CO poisoning by maintaining good gas safety around the home."



"And **CORGI can help out** by directing you to the best trades person, whether they are needed for gas, electrical, ventilation or plumbing work. For more information visit www.trustcorgi.com"

How much of a **priority is gas safety** in the home?

Breaking down the figures, a faulty boiler was more worrying to **younger people** than older people. Almost a third (31%) of 25-34 year olds said it was the most probable risk to their home, whereas only half that proportion (17%) of over 55s listed it as their main concern.

Around the UK, residents in the city of Belfast were most worried about the safety of their gas boiler, with the proportion of respondents listing it as their **top concern** as 28%, in comparison to the national average of 22%.

"Ten million homes in the UK could be in danger of Carbon Monoxide poisoning"



"We all have important dates in our diaries that we cannot miss - such as the car's **MOT**, the day the rent is due, or a hospital check up. Our homes also need regular gas safety inspections and our gas boilers need regular checks by accredited trades professionals to **cut the risk** of Carbon Monoxide poisoning.

"Even when life is at its most hectic, it is really important to remember to have your boiler **serviced annually**."

"More people remember to pay for their TV license than remember to service their boiler."

Despite the importance of gas safety in the home, **only half** (57%) of respondents said they always remembered to have their boiler checked and serviced, which means that around **10 million homes** in the UK could be in danger of Carbon Monoxide poisoning. One in six (17%) said they knew it was important but **always forgot**, whilst 3% said they did not think the gas checks were important at all.

In fact, far more people said they always remembered to pay for their TV license than remembered to keep their boiler up to date with checks and servicing (80% vs. 57%). And more people (64%) said they remembered to tax their car than service their gas appliances.





Chapter 2: How knowledgeable are residents about gas safety?

How much do people know about their gas appliances?

We have already seen how important it is to keep your home **gas appliances safe** and our research has indicated that most people recognise this. But CORGI has found that many residents are **not familiar** with the requirements of their gas appliances. This makes them unable to keep them well maintained, leaving them in danger of Carbon Monoxide poisoning.

Only about **one in six** respondents (17%) said they knew when both their boiler warranty and safety inspections were due, and as many as 41% admitted to not knowing the date of either.

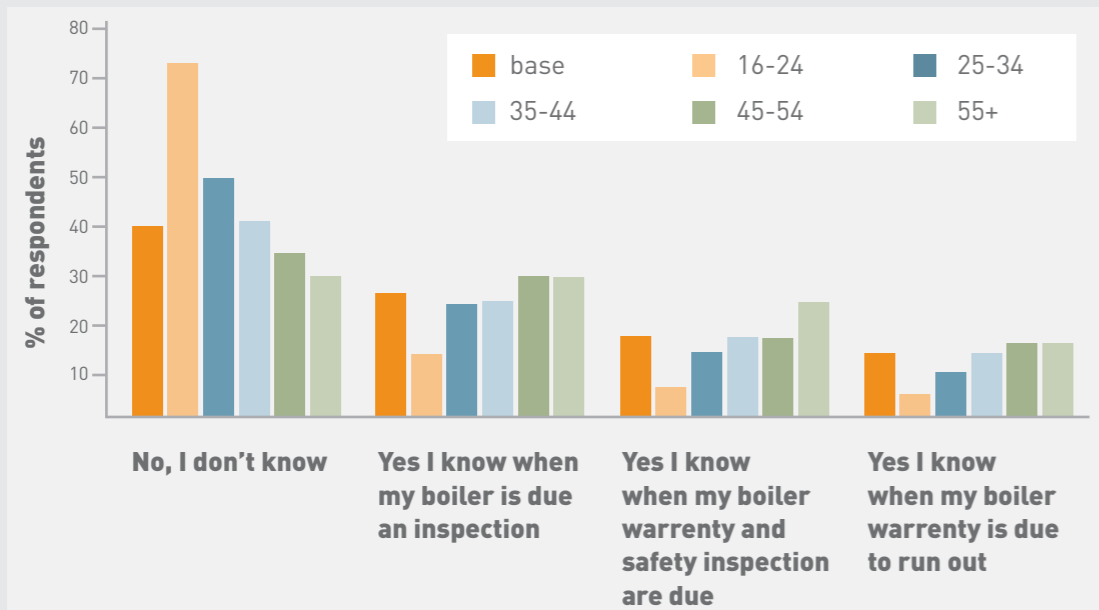


Figure 2. The percentage of people who do not know when their boiler warranty is due to run out or when they are next due a safety inspection

Homeowners are **more likely** to know about their gas safety checks than people in rented accommodation, according to the study. Almost half of tenants (48%) did not know when either their boiler warranty or safety inspection were due compared to only a third (35%) of homeowners.

This may partly be due to the lack of knowledge among **young people** who are less likely to own their own property. Three quarters of respondents (75%) aged between 16 and 24 did not know when their boiler warranty or safety inspection were due.

Younger residents were similarly ignorant of the make and age of their boilers. Almost **two thirds (63%)** did not know - twice the national average of 32%.

Belfast was the city where the biggest proportion of respondents said they did not know this basic information about their boiler, despite being the **most worried** about the safety of it, followed by Glasgow and Norwich.

And we found that homeowners were **far more likely** to know how old and what type their boiler was than those renting, living in social housing, with their parents or as students. Almost three quarters (72%) of respondents who owned their own home said they knew how old their boiler was, compared to just **39% of tenants**, 11% of students, half (49%) of people living in social housing and only a quarter (24%) of those living with their parents.

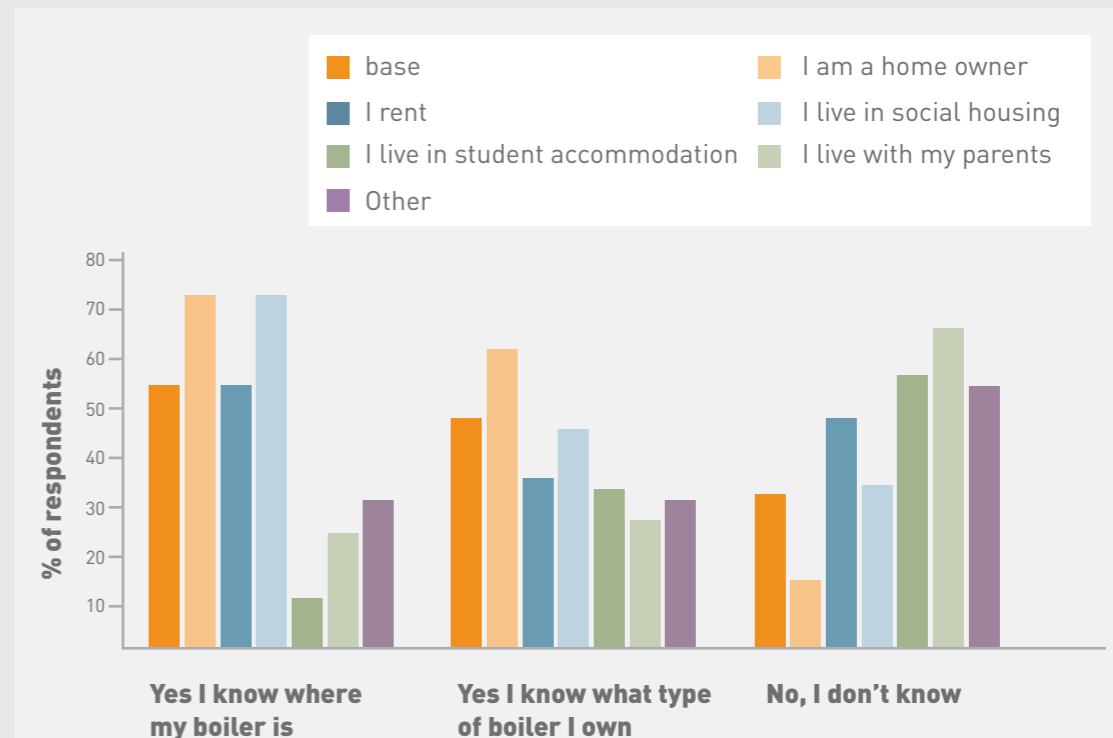


Figure 3. The percentage of people who do not know how old their boiler is





CORGI's top tips

Replacing your boiler

- There is no set timeframe as to how long a domestic gas boiler will last, but the average life span for most is around **10 - 15 years**
- Any replacement gas boiler needs to be **correctly sized** for the required gas heat load and must comply with Building Regulations.
- The type of boiler you choose should suit **your needs** and the available space you have
- If your boiler does not come with a new flue system, you should check with your **accredited installer** that your existing flue system is appropriate. Flues come in varying configurations and therefore have different requirements
- Flues must be kept free of obstacles and **easily accessible** to enable the safe operation of the appliance and regular servicing and maintenance
- Ensure the boiler has the **necessary ventilation**
- Consult a competent and Gas Safe **registered gas installer** when looking to replace your boiler, as they have the necessary skills and knowledge to ensure your new boiler meets your needs, and importantly, expectations

- Building Regulations state that gas-fired boilers installed after 1 April 2005, and oil-fired boilers installed after 1 April 2007, must be either **Band A or B** (high efficiency rated) boilers, whether they are replacements or new installations. A majority of condensing boilers will meet these requirements

Identifying your current boiler

- Most combination boilers will have six pipes coming out of it but will not have a hot water tank, single point water heaters (over-tap electric water heaters) or a cold water storage tank unlike a regular boiler. A **combination boiler** will start up every time the hot tap is turned on
- A **condensing boiler** will usually have a plastic flue (some are metal) with white plume puffs coming out of it when the boiler is working
- **Non-condensing boilers** will usually have a metal flue and the fumes will not be visible as they are hotter than those from a condensing boiler

Do residents know what to do in an emergency?

One of the most important aspects of maintaining gas safety is knowing what to do **in an emergency**. Carbon Monoxide cannot be easily detected so it is vital that residents take the right action quickly and make sure they have a working audible CO alarm installed.

What danger signs to look out for

- **Staining** around appliances and furnishings
- **Pilot lights** blowing out ...where the appliance has a permanent pilot
- Increased **condensation**
- **Yellow/orange, floppy flames** rather than crisp blue flames (some appliances such as gas fires are designed to burn with a yellow flame to appear more realistic)
- Feeling unwell, flu like symptoms, or reports from family members and guests of **feeling unwell**

Please note, **CORGI** does not recommend the use of colour change 'spot' detectors as these do not give an audible alarm warning of the presence of Carbon Monoxide.

"The **pilot light** is one of the key things to keep an eye on to ensure our homes are safe from Carbon Monoxide poisoning. If it frequently blows out this means that not all of the gas from the boiler is burning so it **could be spilling** carbon dioxide.

"In this situation, it is vital to turn off the boiler and **call a certified expert** for help."

The pilot light on a boiler indicates whether or not the **appliance is working**. This small gas flame is used to ignite the larger gas boiler and when it goes out the gas has been cut off due to a range of reasons such as a blockage or a faulty connection.

Of our 3,166 volunteers, 104 women said they did **not know what the pilot light was**, compared to just 40 men.

Most of our respondents (45%) said they would refer to the boiler's instruction manual if the light went out whilst **only one in five (22%)** said they would call an accredited trades professional.

60 people said they would call the emergency services but 21 said they would just ignore the extinguished light.





Bill says

"I think we really need to get the message across that **lives could be saved** if there was greater awareness of gas safety. Far too many people do not know what to do in an **emergency situation** such as if they had a gas escape or a Carbon Monoxide leak, and the consequences of this **could be fatal.**"

"Three quarters of young people would **not know what to do** if they had a gas escape."

Some of the symptoms of Carbon Monoxide poisoning include headaches, nausea, flushed skin, tiredness, and stomach and chest pains. These are often caused by a **leak from a domestic gas appliance**.

Despite the dangers, over one in three (37%) respondents said they would **not know what to do** if they did not have a valid gas safety certificate or if they had a gas escape. Women were again less informed, with 41% saying they did not know in comparison to 30% of men.

Worryingly, three quarters (74%) of young people, twice the national average, said they would not know what to do if they did not have a gas safety certificate or if they had a gas leak in their home, leaving them at **particular risk** of Carbon Monoxide poisoning. In contrast, 82% of over 55s were aware of what they should do in such an emergency.

Belfast, followed by London and Brighton, is where residents had the **least knowledge** of gas safety. Sixty seven percent of respondents in Belfast said they would not know what to do if they did not have a gas safety certificate or if they had a gas escape.

Figure 4. The percentage of people who would not know what to do in case of a leak or if they did not have a valid gas safety certificate by region



CORGI's top tips

What to do if you think your appliance may be **leaking gas?**

- Switch **off the appliance** and do not re-use it until it has been repaired
- **Shut off** the gas supply at the emergency control valve, typically located at the gas meter
- **Extinguish** all sources of ignition such as candles
- Do not turn **any switches**, such as light switches, on or off as these can be a source of ignition
- Do **not** smoke

If gas **continues to escape**, call the 24-hour Gas Emergency Freephone Number 0800 111 999 for England, Scotland and Wales, or 0800 002 001 for Northern Ireland. Open all doors and windows to **ventilate** the property.

What are the main **symptoms** of CO poisoning?

- headaches
- dizziness
- nausea
- breathlessness
- collapse
- loss of consciousness

What else can be a **giveaway of CO poisoning?**

- Your symptoms only occur when you are at home
- Symptoms disappear or get better when you leave home and come back when you return
- Others in your home experience symptoms

If you experience any of these **symptoms**:

Get **fresh air** immediately. Open doors and windows, turn off your Emergency Control Valve (located at your gas meter) as you leave...

- **See your doctor** immediately or go to hospital - let them know that you suspect Carbon Monoxide poisoning. They can do a blood or breath test to check
- If you think there is immediate danger, call the **Gas Emergency Helpline**
- Call a **Gas Safe registered engineer** to inspect your gas appliances and flues immediately

Even your house can show signs of Carbon Monoxide poisoning

- **Lazy yellow or orange flames** mean you need to get your cooker checked
- Soot or yellow/brown **staining** around or on appliances
- Pilot lights that frequently **blow out**
- Increased **condensation** inside windows

Get an **approved Carbon Monoxide alarm**

- CORGI recommends that you fit an approved audible **Carbon Monoxide alarm** in your home to alert you of Carbon Monoxide in your home
- There is no substitute for getting your appliances **checked and serviced** regularly
- CORGI **does not recommend** the use of 'black spot' detectors that change colour when Carbon Monoxide is present. These will not alert you, or make you aware if poisonous Carbon Monoxide is present while you are sleeping
- To **mitigate CO poisoning** it is essential that you always have your gas appliances installed and serviced annually by a Gas Safe registered engineer



Case study

Tina, Great Yarmouth



"It happened on my birthday not last year but the year before. Our boiler was old and we had been told it was **on its last legs** but it was early December and it was cold so we hadn't done anything about it.

My friend came over with her husband who is an accredited tradesman. Suddenly this **alarm went off** and we didn't know what it was but it turned out to be one of our Carbon Monoxide alarms. We had been concerned that our boiler was on its last legs so we had installed two alarms - one for upstairs and one for downstairs. Luckily my friend's husband was there and he had a look at the boiler and **wrote it off there and then**. We turned it off immediately and replaced it with a new one."



Chapter 3: Who do we rely on to keep our homes safe?

Who is responsible for safety at home?

Surprisingly, it seems that traditional views towards the roles of men and women in the home still remain. Over half of respondents (56%) said they **would call a man** if they had an emergency in their home, because they thought safety around the house was a man's job. And almost three quarters (72%) of men asked said home safety was the male's responsibility, putting them in charge of plumbing, wiring and renewing the boiler warranty.

"Three quarters of men believe they should be in charge of home safety."

We found **little differentiation** between the age groups with regard to this question. Respondents in the 16-24 age bracket were just as likely to believe that men were responsible for home safety as those in the 44-54 or over 55s groups (57% vs. 56% and 58%).

But there was discrepancy between different areas of the UK. Residents in Manchester, Edinburgh and Brighton agreed **most frequently** that home safety was the remit of the man (63%, 63% and 62% respectively), whereas Cardiff residents most **heavily opposed** this view, with one in three (35%) saying they strongly disagreed that home safety was the man's job.

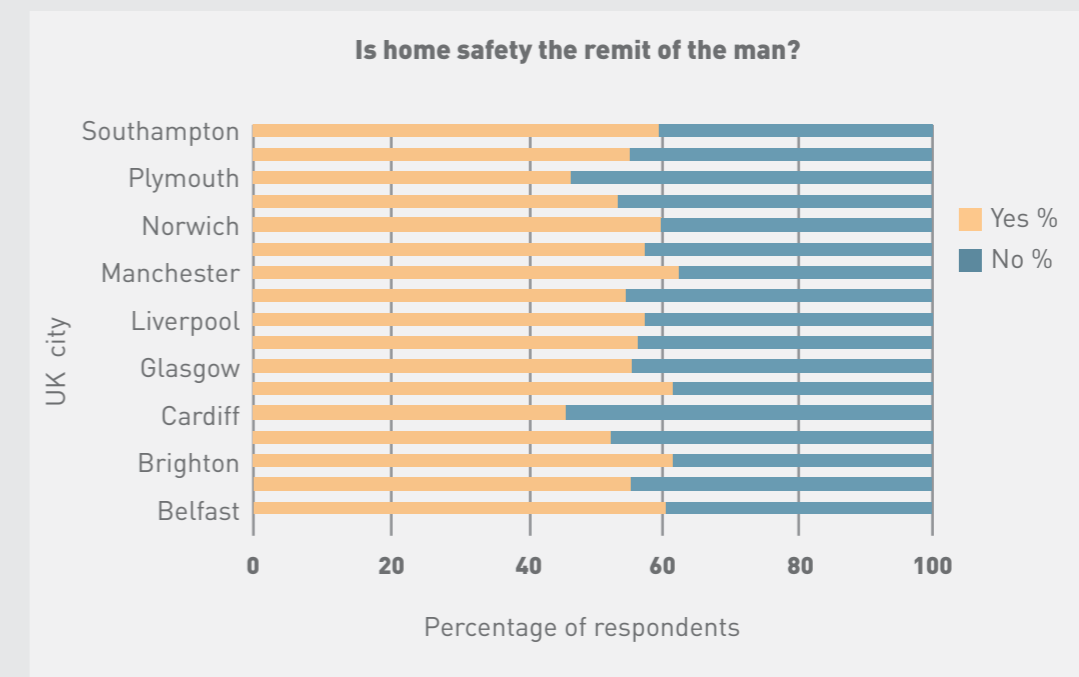


Figure 5. Is home safety the remit of the man?





Bill says

"Us men often like to be in charge of **protecting** our homes and families. But with this comes great responsibility.

"**Everyone** in the household should be on the lookout for signs of a leak, and should help to keep their home safe by knowing about their gas appliances and when they are due their safety checks.

"As with all aspects of home safety, you should still **know how** your home works yourself, even if you outsource your repairs and maintenance work to a qualified trades person."

On top of this, we found that homeowners were **more likely** than tenants and occupants of social housing to put home safety in the hands of a man, with as many as 69% of respondents agreeing that it was a male role.

What is the perception of trades people?

Cowboy traders cost Britain's homes **£1 billion a year** in sky-high bills and botched jobs, and prompt 100,000 annual complaints¹. They can also leave households in great danger of Carbon Monoxide poisoning from badly maintained gas appliances for instance.

All gas trades people must have the **correct accreditation** under the ACS framework and be a member of the legal register of accredited gas tradesmen Gas Safe Register (formerly CORGI's responsibility). Registration to Gas Safe register is the only proof that they have undergone the necessary training and vetting to legally maintain and repair gas appliances in the home.

These regulations are in place to **keep residents safe** from Carbon Monoxide poisoning and dangerous gas work which can occur from appliances and flues that are not properly installed, serviced or ventilated. Carbon Monoxide poisoning kills around **20 people** every year and injures many others, causing paralysis and brain damage in extreme cases.

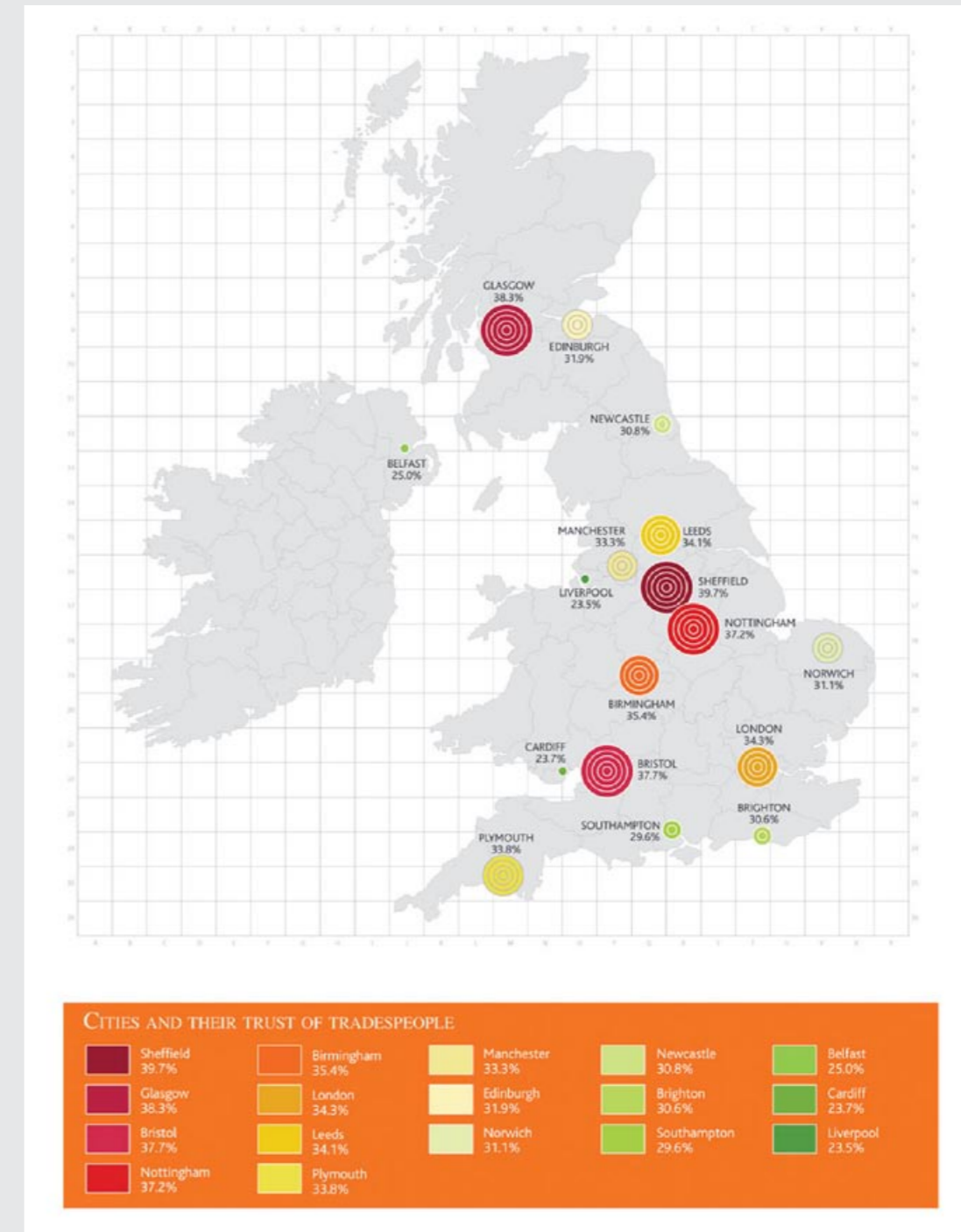


Figure 6. The percentage of people who do not trust accredited tradesmen

¹ Michael Lea, The Sun, 5 July 2007



The report revealed that a third (33%) of respondents across the country said they **did not trust** accredited trades professionals. One in four people (23%) using an accredited tradesperson said they did **not have confidence** in them. So although accreditation by design is a mark of reliability, not everyone recognises it as such.

The cities with the **widest distrust** of trades people were Sheffield and Glasgow where 38% of respondents said they did not have confidence in their trader.

Despite the dangers, some people are still using rogue traders who do not have the necessary qualifications to keep them safe. More than **one in six** respondents (17%) said they did not use accredited traders even though they trusted them to do a good job. And a further 10% said they used **illegal traders** and questioned the reliability of accredited trades people.



"CORGI was set up to provide an accreditation scheme which would show residents which gas installers **they can trust** and weed out the ones they can't. Traders must still have a license today to operate legally.

"It makes me **really angry** just to see these cowboys calling themselves engineers. I have seen first hand the problems caused by illegal trades people who are not properly trained or vetted. They will **rip you off**, leave your home in danger of more serious and expensive faults in the future, and will be less likely to offer you support in the event of an incident, which can cost you time and money and can be an incredibly frustrating experience"

"Most importantly, their shoddy repair jobs could put you **at risk** of Carbon Monoxide poisoning which could be fatal."

CORGI's top tips

How to choose a qualified installer

- Every gas installer is legally permitted to operate in England, Scotland or Wales will carry a Gas Safe Register **ID card** with their own unique license number
- **CORGI** provides registration for trades people in Northern Ireland
- Before you employ any gas installer, always make sure you ask to see their **registration card** and check what work they are qualified to do, which is included on the reverse of it
- Details of registered gas installers in Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales) and the Isle of Man are available from **Gas Safe Register** on **0800 408 5500**. For information on gas installers in Northern Ireland and the Channel Islands contact CORGI on **0800 915 0485**
- Landlords have a **legal duty** to ensure that regular checks and services are carried out by a registered installer
- A **CORGI** member will be legally registered with Gas Safe Register, and will also benefit from relevant up-to-date information and advice through CORGI's technical hotline and Installer member magazine. Consumers can benefit from a comprehensive service warranty product, CORGI HeatCare plan, and a "Find an installer" service on our website (www.corgihome.com)

How to spot a cowboy

Three types:

- **Full illegals** - people who carry out gas work without having the required accreditation or registration
- **"Lapsed" illegal workers** - previously held a CORGI or Gas Safe Register registration but are no longer registered. They will have significant knowledge gaps regarding the latest legislation and regulations, which would impact upon their ability to work safely on gas
- **Part time illegal gas workers** - an operative of a Gas Safe registered business that carries out private jobs, typically for friends and family. Although the work is likely to be safe, installations cannot be notified and there is no insurance or warranty support available for customers



"We clearly have a lot of work to do to assure people that **they can trust** accredited trades people. There are many good, honest engineers out there whose reputations have been damaged by these **rogue traders**."

"One in four people said they did **not have confidence** in the tradesperson they used even though they were accredited."



Case study

Ally, Swindon



"Gas safety is as much as a worry as anything else in the home and I would definitely want someone who was fully registered to do my repairs. It would be **too dangerous** to go to somebody else, even if they cost less.

With more people preferring to DIY than hire in registered trades people, the potential for **unregistered and dangerous** gas installations is alarming."

How to chose a qualified installer

Landlords are **responsible** for keeping gas appliances safe in the properties they rent out, under the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations. They must give their tenants a copy of the gas safety record within **28 days** of a safety

check being carried out or before they move in. And they are also obliged to show their tenants how to turn off their gas, electrical and water services in the event of an emergency.

But our research has discovered that many of them **may be failing** to fully carry out their duties to their tenants.

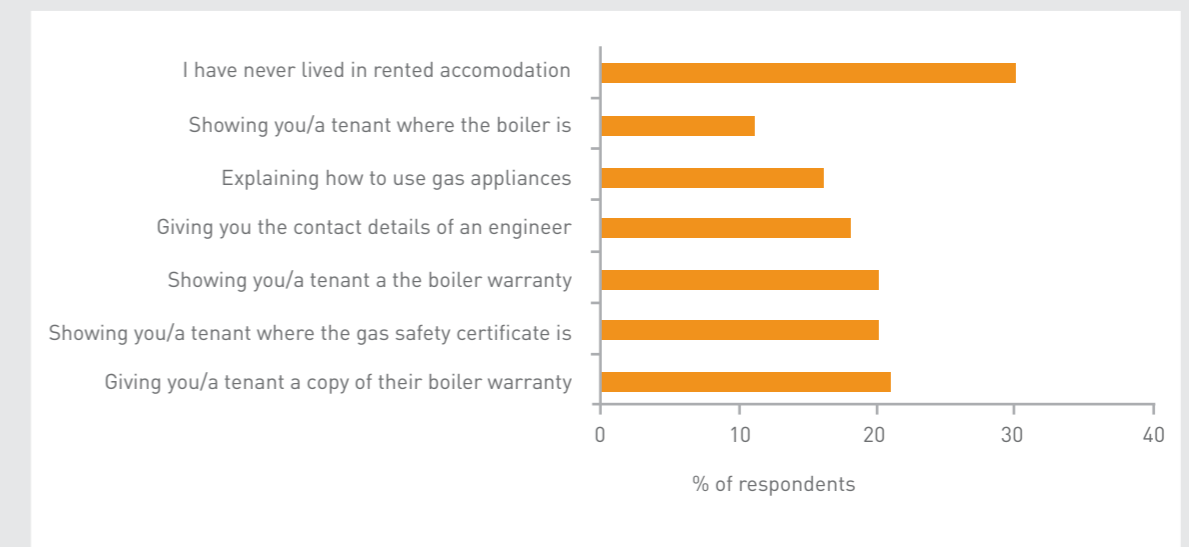


Figure 7. Which of the following have you not experienced from a landlord

Almost **a third (32%)** of people living in rented accommodation said they had **never received** any of the basic information required from their landlords on how to keep safe from Carbon Monoxide poisoning - such as a copy of their boiler warranty or an explanation of how to use their appliances.





"I was **really concerned** to find out that so many landlords are putting their tenants in danger by **failing** to provide them with the correct home safety information. The service they are giving the paying occupants of their properties is just not good enough.

"I have worked with some **really great**, reliable landlords during my career, but there are obviously some that are giving the others a **bad name**."

The elderly and over 55s were the **most neglected** as the study showed 37% claimed they had never been given these basic details.

"The elderly are suffering most from irresponsible **landlords** who are **failing to provide** gas safety information, putting them in danger of Carbon Monoxide poisoning."

One in five (20%) people said their landlord had never shown them where their **emergency valve** was, even though this is a key legal requirement. Young people were the worst catered for in this respect, with 35% of respondents aged 16-24 saying they had never had their gas control valve pointed out to them.

The CORGI report found that landlords in Glasgow, Norwich and Leeds were particularly negligent - the proportion of respondents who said they had not received any information at all in these cities was **41%, 39% and 36%** respectively.



CORGI's **top tips**

Safety in rented accommodation

Your landlord **must** legally:

- carry out checks and servicing **every year** on gas appliances including gas boilers, cookers, hobs and gas fires using a Gas Safe registered Installer (CORGI registered for Northern Ireland and the Channel Islands)
- provide you with a gas **safety certificate** for the gas appliances
- show you how to turn off the gas in the event of an **emergency**
- ensure all gas equipment (including any appliance left by a previous tenant) is **safe** for continued use or
- **remove** it before re-letting

If you think that your landlord is not complying with the law you should get in touch with the **Health and Safety Executive** (HSE). Failure to follow gas safety requirements is a **criminal offence** and the HSE can issue a formal caution and may prosecute your landlord.

Visit www.hse.org.uk or call the HSE on 0845 345 0055.



Case study

Phil, North London



"My landlord's provision of gas safety **information is poor**. He is not really interested that much, as long as you get your annual gas safety check documents, that's about **as far as it goes**.

They should certainly do more. In our situation our boiler has been flagged up **two or three times** due to problems which could make it dangerous, but they chose **not to do anything** about it. I have spoken to our landlords on many occasions and they are promising to replace our boiler when they redo our kitchen but we are now on a **waiting list** and it could be five or six years before we see it happening."



Chapter 4: How is the economic downturn **affecting home safety?**



"We can't afford to let home safety slip during the **credit crunch**.

"Servicing your boiler **regularly** will make it more efficient, cutting the cost of bills as well as helping the environment and keeping **your home safe** from Carbon Monoxide.

"If a boiler is not serviced annually, it could **gradually get blocked** with by-products as could the flue. As a result, it would become less efficient because it will have to work harder and harder to produce the same heat.

"This will cause your average household bills to rise and you risk a **greater build-up** of deadly Carbon Monoxide.

"There are many ways to reduce our energy bills but compromising on safety is **not** one of them."

How important is maintaining home safety when on a **limited budget?**

Homes across the UK are finding their cash flow increasingly limited as **unemployment figures soar** and house prices plummet. But keeping our homes safe is as important as ever.

Strict budgeting requires residents to prioritise what they really want and need to do with their homes. Although two thirds of respondents (63%) said that they would generally pay **more attention** to home safety than their home's appearance or their own personal grooming, this changed when money got tighter.

Almost half (49%) of respondents said they would prioritise **aesthetic** household improvements such as painting, furnishing and flooring over replacing or enhancing their safety devices if they were on a limited budget. Less than one in three (31%) people would keep home safety at the top of their list.

We found that people would increasingly prioritise **gas safety with age**. Only a quarter (24%) of 16-24 year olds would spend money on gas safety appliances if they were trying to economise whereas more than one in three (37%) over 55s said that they would keep improving the safety of their home.

Poor maintenance could cause a 5% reduction in your boiler's efficiency, which will lead to a **large increase** in your annual gas bill - easily costing far more than the typical cost of a boiler service of around £100.





CORGI's top tips

Cutting energy bills

- Turn your **thermostat down** by 1°C and you could save up to £65 on your heating bill
- Ensure your hot water cylinder has a **jacket** (if you can see the copper tank it has no jacket) and insulate the hot water pipes
- **Close your curtains** at dusk to reduce the amount of heat escaping through your windows
- Turn **heating off** just before you go out or go to bed – your home will take a while to cool down
- Set your hot water cylinder thermostat **to 43°C**. The core standards act specifies 43 degrees C as the maximum water outlet temperature. A Thermostat Mixing Valve can be used to control this
- Consider installing a **new boiler** which will be a lot more efficient

Is cost cutting putting residents **in danger**?

We have found that by economising on **home safety** during the recession, residents are putting themselves at risk of Carbon Monoxide poisoning.

Almost half (45%) of respondents said they would turn to **rogue traders** or have a go at **DIY repairs** themselves rather than calling a certified trades person, in order to save money. According to the statistics, this means that twenty four million people in England and Wales **could be in danger** of Carbon Monoxide poisoning from appliances and flues that are not properly installed, maintained or ventilated properly.

“Twenty four million people in England and Wales could be in danger of carbon monoxide poisoning”

Although three quarters of men said they put themselves in charge of home safety, they were also more likely to take risks which could endanger their homes and families. **Almost half** (49%) said they would attempt to repair or maintain appliances themselves, even though they were not sufficiently trained, or call an illegal tradesman to cut bills - in comparison to 42% of women.

Of the 183 volunteers aged 16-24 that we asked about home safety, 61% said they would not consider cutting corners with maintenance bills, making them the age group **least likely** to call an unlicensed handy man or put their own DIY skills to test. The over 55s were the most likely to however, with 47% saying they would at least consider it.



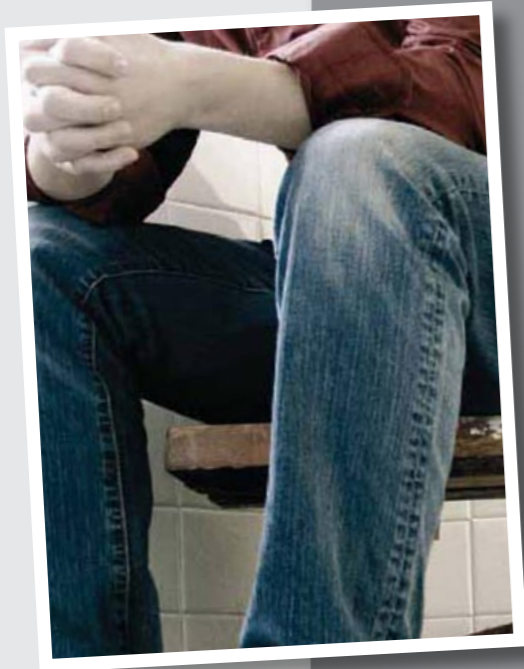
Bill says

“DIY and gas appliances **do not mix**. It might seem an easy problem to fix, but by having a go yourself you could cause a much **more serious** fault which could be more expensive to repair and could endanger your family and your home.”



Case study

Iain, Newton Abbot



"I once cleaned the burner on a gas powered water heater on a house boat. When we fired it up there was a **big bang** and a cloud of flame spread across the ceiling and set light to the curtains. And 12 years ago, I cleaned the entire insides of our old boiler, as the pilot light kept going out, and the flame was very yellow. We had to **get a new one** very soon after that.

I was brought up to be self-sufficient but I **no longer mess** with gas appliances, and my children have been taught to use professional fitters".



CORGI's top tips

DIY is a **Don't** for gas boilers

- DO NOT try and carry out any work on your boiler, **however simple** it may seem
- DO NOT **replace or remove** parts, do not even remove the outer casing
- DO NOT **paint the casing** of your appliance without first consulting with a registered gas installer
- DO NOT **block, cover** or otherwise **interfere** with gas appliance flues
- DO NOT **alter your home** without first making sure the changes will not affect the safety of your gas appliances – this includes replacing windows, altering the structure of the property, and cavity insulation
- DO NOT **block or obstruct** any fixed ventilation grills or air bricks
- DO NOT **cover an appliance** or place items of clothing near to an appliance to get them dry
- DO NOT use a gas appliance if you think it **does not work** correctly.
- **If in doubt**, contact your local registered installer for advice

• **All work** should be done by a Gas Safe registered heating engineer and they should also be registered with a Competent Persons Scheme.

• For more hints and tips on keeping your home safe, visit **www.corgihome.com**.



Summary and Conclusion

From the report, it is apparent that there is a lot that could be done to **improve gas safety** in the home. Homeowners, renters and occupants of social housing are concerned about the danger of their gas appliances malfunctioning, but there is a widespread **lack of awareness** about how they can avoid it or what to do if the worst did happen.

The findings of the study indicate that half of the British population may not know when their boiler warranty is due to run out or when they should have a gas safety inspection. These procedures are **vital in preventing casualties** from Carbon Monoxide poisoning, most of which are caused by poor maintenance. Young people appear to be particularly unaware of the basic information which could keep them safe.

This lack of knowledge means that many **people do not prioritise gas safety in the home** - renewing the TV license often comes before servicing the boiler. Many people forget the necessary routine checks whilst some do not believe they are important at all.

The report has also shown us that residents need to take more responsibility for their gas safety. Three quarters of men put themselves in charge of safety around the home but they were also more likely to turn to illegal traders or put their DIY skills to the test to repair appliances. We have also seen that many landlords are not providing their tenants with the information they are legally required to, such as highlighting the gas emergency valve in the home. The **consequences of all this could be fatal**.

Most people in the UK are now using accredited trades people, which is a positive sign. However, some are still **risking their homes by choosing unlicensed practitioners**. The study has also highlighted a general skepticism over the reliability of the profession, and people do not always recognise accreditation as a marker for trustworthiness.

Finally, gas safety awareness is more important than ever now as Britain readjusts to the economic downturn of 2009. Financial strains are affecting residents' ability to keep their home safe, and they are turning to unaccredited trades people, DIY quick-fixes, or even abandoning gas safety altogether to save money.

CORGI is the UK's home safety company and is campaigning to change this. Help and advice on how to keep the home safe is available on their new website, **www.corgihome.co.uk**, where you can also order Home Safety Packs for complete reassurance that your home and family are safe. The packs include Carbon Monoxide alarms, which CORGI recommends every household installs.

Appendix

1.1 About CORGI

The CORGI brand is known by 8 out of 10 people in the UK, and historically has stood for safety, expertise and trust. Born out of the Gas Board as a membership of leading gas installers, CORGI went on to run the mandatory gas scheme for government for many years.

Although best known as the gas scheme registrar, CORGI has offered other products and services into the heating industry for many years. Gas installers have been able to obtain technical manuals, books, magazines, warning labels, tools and insurance as well as attend specific exhibitions and events from CORGI.

The CORGI team provides an enviable mix of world-leading technical expertise and support for its members, years of experience running registration schemes, national sales and marketing functions as well as the ability to broker and deliver a wide range of affinity products and services into the heating industry.

CORGI is committed to supporting the gas expert, both in making their jobs easier and in ensuring the general public are properly informed and able to get a quality gas installer when they need one.

1.2 Background for the research

The research was carried out by Opinion Matters on behalf of CORGI in 2009 with 3166 UK adults.

The respondents were made up of:
1309 homeowners
1006 tenants
692 living in social housing
9 living in student accommodation
124 living with parents
26 living in other circumstances.

1.3 References

Health and Safety Executive 'Gas safety review: options for change', 1999 www.hse.gov.uk/consult/disdocs/dde14b.pdf

Michael Lea, The Sun, 5 July 2007

'Looking after the home' CORGI Opinion Matters Survey July 2009

1.4 Further reading

CORGI websites
www.corgihome.co.uk
www.trustcorgi.co.uk

Directgov - Domestic gas installation and health and safety
http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/HomeAndCommunity/Planning/ChoosingTradersAndServiceProviders/DG_4018095

Carbon Monoxide Consumer Awareness Alliance (COCAA) <http://www.becarbonmonoxideaware.com/#slide1>

Gas Safe Register
www.gassaferegister.co.uk

