

J.D. Power Reports: Customer Satisfaction with Residential Gas Utilities Improves For a Third Consecutive Year

Colorado Springs Utilities; Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania; DTE Energy; Madison Gas & Electric; NW Natural; Oklahoma Natural Gas; TECO Peoples Gas; and UGI Each Rank Highest in Residential Natural Gas Utility Customer Satisfaction in Their Respective Region

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WESTLAKE VILLAGE, Calif., Sept. 17, 2014 /PRNewswire/ -- Even though the U.S. faced another harsh winter and an increase in the average monthly gas bill this past season, customer satisfaction with residential gas utilities improves for a third consecutive year, according to the J.D. Power 2014 Gas Utility Residential Customer Satisfaction StudySM released today.

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The study, now in its 13th year, measures residential customer satisfaction with gas utility companies across six factors: billing & payment; price; corporate citizenship; communications; customer service; and field service.

"Although average gas bill amounts have increased due to the colder-than-usual winter, natural gas utilities have offset the negative effect by improving engagement with their customers," said Andrew Heath, director of the energy practice at J.D. Power. "That engagement isn't just about the bill and responding to customer service questions, but it's also about effective communication on topics that matter to customers and demonstrating leadership in the local community."

KEY FINDINGS

- Overall satisfaction with natural gas utility companies averages 644 (on a 1,000-point scale), continuing a steady year-over-year improvement from 627 in 2011.
- Payments made online at a utility's website are the most satisfying to customers, compared with all other payment types (743 vs. 718, respectively). Satisfaction is significantly higher among customers who receive an electronic bill statement than among those who receive a traditional paper statement (743 vs. 715, respectively).
- While more than one-half (51%) of customers indicate having an online account set up on their utility's website, up from 48 percent in 2013, only 3 in 10 customers receive their monthly bill electronically.
- Communication from gas utilities informing customers about efforts to keep energy costs low is a key driver of satisfaction.
 - Educated customers have higher price satisfaction when they are familiar with conservation programs and when they take action to lower their bills (familiar with and take action 712 vs. not familiar with and take no action 553).
 - Slightly less than one-fifth (18%) of gas customers take action to save energy, up from 13 percent in 2013.
 - Price satisfaction is a significant 232 points higher when customers are very familiar with their utility's conservation programs, compared with when they are not at all familiar (760 vs. 528, respectively).
- Corporate citizenship satisfaction is 602, up 6 points year over year, driven primarily by utility efforts to maintain a safe gas system. Satisfaction ratings for utility efforts to maintain a safe gas system is 6.54 (on a 10-point scale) in 2014, compared with 6.47 in 2013.
- The average reported monthly bill amount has increased in 2014 to \$81, up from \$75 in 2013 but lower than in 2010 at \$90.

Study Rankings:

The study ranks large and midsize utility companies in four geographic regions: East, Midwest, South and West. Companies in the midsize utility segment serve between 125,000 and 399,999 residential customers, and companies in the large utility segment serve 400,000 or more residential customers.

East Region

Among large utilities in the East region, UGI ranks highest with a score of 662 for a second consecutive year. Following in the segment rankings are New Jersey Natural Gas (653) and National Fuel Gas (646).

In the East region midsize utility segment, Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania ranks highest (641), followed by NSTAR (631) and Rochester Gas & Electric (630).

Midwest Region

DTE Energy ranks highest among large utilities in the Midwest region, with a score of 676. Consumers Energy ranks second (666) and MidAmerican Energy ranks third (664).

Among midsize utilities in the Midwest region, Madison Gas & Electric ranks highest with a score of 662. Alliant Energy ranks second (648), followed by Louisville Gas & Electric (645).

South Region

Oklahoma Natural Gas ranks highest in the large utility segment in the South region for a third consecutive year, with a score of 676. CenterPoint Energy-South ranks second (665), and Texas Gas Service ranks third (663).

Among midsize utilities in the South region, TECO Peoples Gas ranks highest with a score of 680 for a second consecutive year. Following in the segment rankings are South Carolina Electric & Gas (663) and Virginia Natural Gas (658).

West Region

NW Natural ranks highest among large utilities in the West region for a second consecutive year, with a score of 678. Following in the segment rankings are Southern California Gas Company (670) and Southwest Gas (661).

Among midsize utilities in the West region, Colorado Springs Utilities ranks highest with a score of 669. Cascade Natural Gas ranks second (660), followed by Intermountain Gas Company (658).

The 2014 Gas Utility Residential Customer Satisfaction Study is based on more than 69,800 responses from residential customers of 83 large and midsize gas utilities across the continental United States. The study was fielded between September 2013 and July 2014.

Overall Customer Satisfaction Index Scores

(Based on a 1,000-point scale)

East Region: Large Segment

UGI	662
New Jersey Natural Gas	653
National Fuel Gas	646
PSE&G	643
Washington Gas	636
BGE	635
East Large Segment Average	630
PECO	628

National Grid	620
Con Edison	607
Philadelphia Gas Works	596
East Region: Midsize Segment	
Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania	641
NSTAR	631
Rochester Gas & Electric	630
Elizabethtown Gas	628
NYSEG	625
South Jersey Gas Company	625
East Midsize Segment Average	624
Yankee Gas	623
Connecticut Natural Gas	622
Southern Connecticut Gas	621
Equitable Gas	620
Columbia Gas of Massachusetts	616
Peoples Natural Gas	608
Midwest Region: Large Segment	
DTE Energy	676
Consumers Energy	666
MidAmerican Energy	664
CenterPoint Energy-Midwest	651
Atmos Energy-Midwest	649

Xcel Energy-Midwest	645
Black Hills Energy	643
Columbia Gas of Ohio	641
Vectren	641
We Energies	641
Midwest Large Segment Average	640
NIPSCO	637
Kansas Gas Service	631
Laclede Gas	623
Nicor Gas	621
Ameren Illinois	617
Missouri Gas Energy	616
Peoples Gas	601
Midwest Region: Midsize Segment	
Madison Gas & Electric	662
Alliant Energy	648
Louisville Gas & Electric	645
Dominion East Ohio Gas	643
Metropolitan Utilities District	643
Minnesota Energy Resources	641
Midwest Midsize Segment Average	635
Duke Energy	633
Wisconsin Public Service	631

Michigan Gas Utilities	630
Citizens Energy Group	624
SEMCO Energy	618
North Shore Gas	604
South Region: Large Segment	
Oklahoma Natural Gas	676
CenterPoint Energy-South	665
Texas Gas Service	663
South Large Segment Average	662
Atmos Energy-South	658
PSNC Energy	656
Piedmont Natural Gas	654
South Region: Midsize Segment	
TECO Peoples Gas	680
South Carolina Electric & Gas	663
Virginia Natural Gas	658
Columbia Gas of Virginia	651
CPS Energy	651
South Midsize Segment Average	650
Alagasco	643
SourceGas Arkansas	643
Mountaineer Gas Company	634
MLGW	622

West Region: Large Segment

NW Natural	678
Southern California Gas Company	670
Southwest Gas	661
West Large Segment Average	652
Questar Gas	645
Puget Sound Energy	641
San Diego Gas & Electric	638
Pacific Gas and Electric	635
Xcel Energy-West	628
New Mexico Gas Company	622

West Region: Midsize Segment

Colorado Springs Utilities	669
Cascade Natural Gas	660
Intermountain Gas Company	658
Avista	651
West Midsize Segment Average	649
Montana-Dakota Utilities	646
NorthWestern Energy	642
UniSource Energy Services	642
Long Beach Gas & Oil	611

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