



FOR MORE INFORMATION
Denise DiMeglio, 610-228-2102
denise@gregoryfca.com

Customer Satisfaction with Utilities Inches Up in Competitive Energy Landscape, ACSI Data Show

ANN ARBOR, Mich., (March 20, 2018) – Despite rapid advances in the energy industry throughout 2017, customer satisfaction with utilities grew at a crawl. Customer satisfaction with gas and electric providers inched up 0.4 percent to an [American Customer Satisfaction Index \(ACSI®\) score](#) of 75.2 (on a 100-point scale).

The ACSI results include cooperative, investor-owned, and municipal utilities, the last of which drove the 2017 uptick. Municipal utilities improved customer satisfaction by 4.2 percent for a score of 75. Cooperative utilities slipped 1.3 percent to 77, the top score among the three categories. Investor-owned utilities stood still at 75.

“Energy suppliers face an increasingly competitive landscape,” said David VanAmburg, Managing Director at ACSI. “The emergence of distributed generation, the rise of renewable energy sources, and the relatively low cost of natural gas are starting to shift the tides. Municipal utilities have the advantage of lower residential rates and greater investments in renewable energy, which are translating to more reliable service, quicker restoration following outages, and as a result, increasing customer satisfaction.”

All municipal utilities improved their customer satisfaction scores, with the Salt River Project remaining on top at 80 after a 3 percent gain. CPS Energy also rose 3 percent to a 75, with the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power bringing up the rear with a score of 70, a 1 percent gain.

Among investor-owned utilities, CenterPoint Energy took the lead at 82. Its 4 percent jump year over year was the biggest in the category, and represented its second straight year of improvement. Atmos Energy, with a score of 80, sat in second place, unchanged from last year, while Southern Company rose 3 percent to 79. Tied for third place at 78 are Consolidated Edison (down 1 percent), Dominion Energy (up 1 percent), NiSource (unchanged), and PPL (up 1 percent). Amid devastating California wildfires, PG&E dropped 5 percent to tie for last place with Eversource Energy (down 1 percent) at 70.

Cooperative utilities were the one category to deteriorate this year, with the one named company, Touchstone Energy, down 1 percent to 77.

Across all utilities, residential customers found billing harder to understand and staff less courteous and helpful. Residents also wanted more energy-saving information and green programs.

On the other hand, customers reported that across the sector, electric service is reliable, restorations after outages have improved, and they're more satisfied with utilities' websites.

“Utilities can't control the weather, but they can control the flow of information and the quality of information consumers receive, especially around outages,” said VanAmburg. “In addition to service updates, utilities can use their websites to offer the information on energy-saving opportunities and green efforts that customers are seeking.”

The ACSI Utilities report is based on 15,116 customer surveys collected between January 5 and December 13, 2017. It's part of a larger Utilities, Shipping and Health Care report that is available for download [here](#).

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The [American Customer Satisfaction Index](#) (ACSI®) has been a national economic indicator for almost 25 years. It measures and analyzes customer satisfaction with more than 300 companies in 44 industries and 10 economic sectors, including various services of federal and local government agencies. Reported on a scale of 0 to 100, ACSI scores are based on data from interviews with roughly 180,000 customers annually. For more information, visit www.theacsi.org.

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