

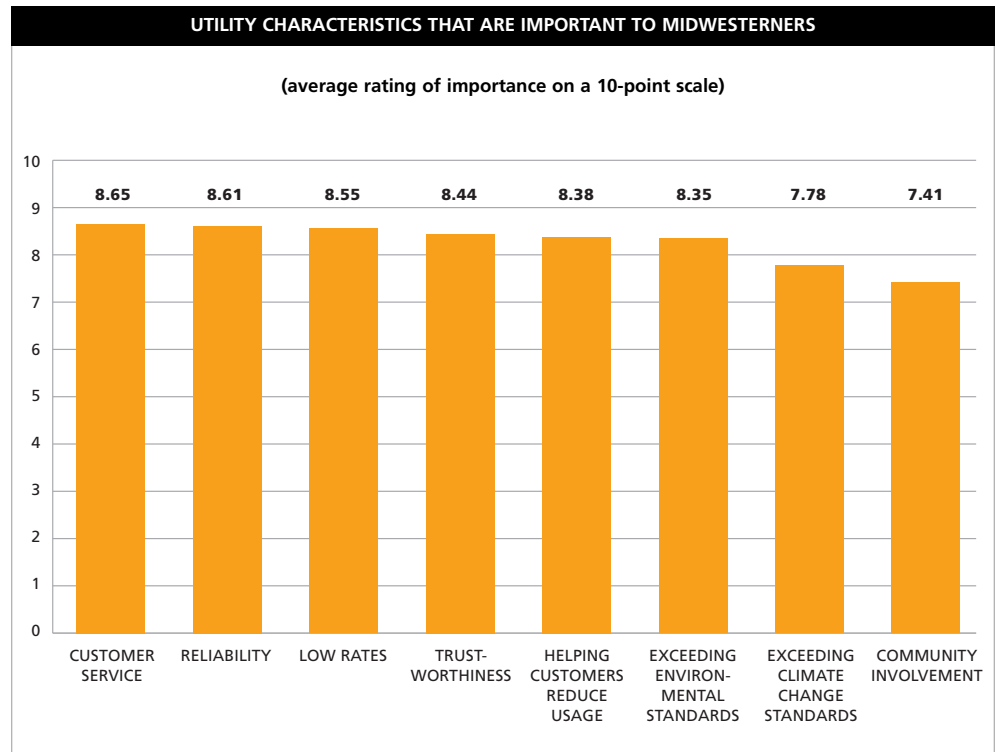


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Public Expectations

CUSTOMERS HAVE MODEST EXPECTATIONS OF UTILITIES ON CLIMATE CHANGE

An Energy Center of Wisconsin study of public perceptions finds that Midwesterners have modest expectations of their utility taking voluntary actions on climate change. Among eight utility characteristics studied, Midwesterners ranked customer service, energy reliability, and low rates highest. Exceeding any requirements on climate change ranked seventh.



Among characteristics with environmental connections, helping customers reduce energy usage placed highest (with an average rating of 8.38 on a 10-point scale), followed closely by exceeding environmental standards (8.35). Exceeding climate change standards rated noticeably lower (7.78).

The small differences among top-rated expectations seem to suggest that utility customers want it all—good, low-cost service from their utilities that is as environmentally friendly as possible. Providing assistance to customers in increasing their energy efficiency and reducing their usage is a way utilities can meet several of these expectations.

Voluntary climate change-specific actions are not yet a top-level priority for most utility customers, but these expectations may change as public understanding of climate change evolves. The Energy Center plans to continue tracking these metrics.

The Energy Center of Wisconsin is an independent nonprofit that seeks solutions to energy challenges. We serve members, clients, and society through innovative research and education in support of economic and environmental sustainability.

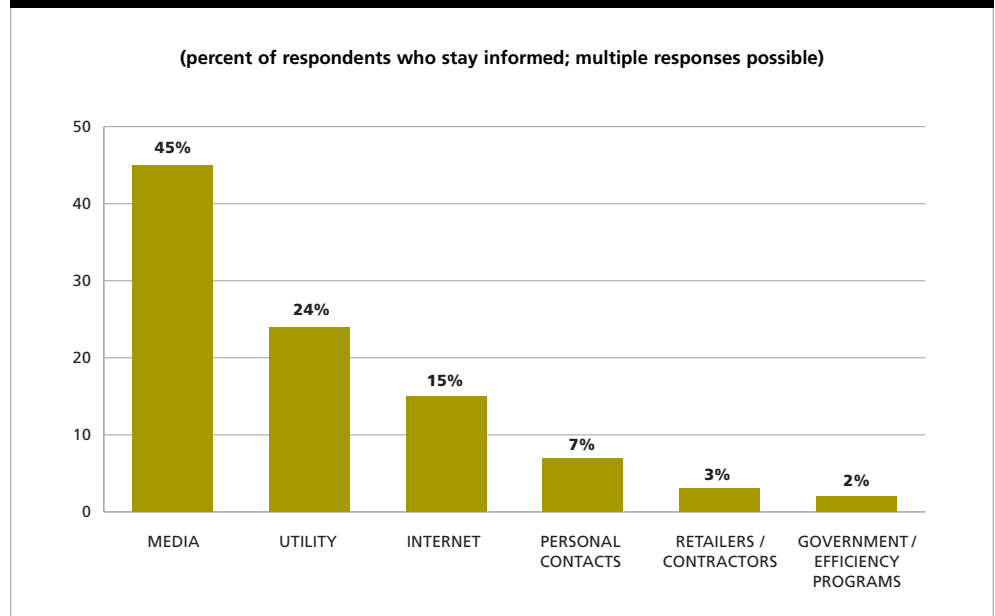
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ABOUT THE STUDY

The Climate Change and Energy Study of Public Opinion is an on-going Energy Center of Wisconsin initiative. Project sponsors include the Integrity Energy Group; Wisconsin Energy Conservation Corporation; Wisconsin Power and Light Company, an Alliant Energy company; Wisconsin Public Power Inc.; and Xcel Energy.

Results presented here are based on 3,284 comprehensive surveys completed by residents of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin in late November and early December 2007. High-level results are being made public through three communiqués. Detailed reports were presented to project sponsors. The study will be repeated in 2008 to track changes, expand coverage beyond the Midwest, and explore some issues in more depth.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT OPPORTUNITIES TO SAVE ENERGY IN THE HOME



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Critical role for utilities

INFORMING CUSTOMERS

Utilities in most Midwestern states serve a critical role in informing the public about energy efficiency. Three-fourths of Midwesterners stay informed about ways to save energy in the home either “somewhat” or “a lot,” and these households rely on media coverage and their utilities as their primary information sources. The Internet and personal contacts round out the other common sources of energy-saving information. This ranking holds true across all nine states surveyed, although the share of households citing their utility as an information source ranged from a low of 19 percent in Illinois to a high of 31 percent in Iowa and Minnesota.

Staying informed may or may not lead to energy efficient actions. More research is needed to understand which information sources lead Midwesterners to change their practices and purchase decisions. However, this study suggests that utilities are a well-positioned information channel to help the public moderate their energy consumption. 🌀

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THIS STUDY

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