

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following are the top-line findings for the study's main objectives based on the results of a telephone survey of 376 randomly selected residential members of Vermont Electric Cooperative conducted in June of 2010. The main conclusions are highlighted below, followed by the key findings and a detailed graphic representation of the results for all survey questions.

- ◆ One of the most notable conclusions in this study is that overall satisfaction has remained steady compared to past studies and is significantly higher than it was in 2006. In addition, most of the performance attributes are rated positively and do not differ significantly from the 2009 study. This is always good news following a very recent rate increase.
- ◆ Often when a study follows an increase in cost, members' perception of their electric rates becomes the strongest driver of overall satisfaction. However, *Member Service* is instead the strongest driver of overall satisfaction among VEC members, an area in which the co-op is doing well. In fact, *having highly-trained and professional employees and courteous, understanding, and helpful employees* are the two attributes evaluated most positively in this study. *Resolving issues and problems* is also evaluated positively, although there is room for improvement. Those who contacted the co-op in the past year evaluate the contact less positively than they did in 2009, with those having contacted the co-op regarding an outage giving the least positive ratings. Improving and enhancing the member service provided will lead to the most improvement in overall satisfaction.
- ◆ Not surprisingly following a number of power outages last winter caused by high winds and heavy snow, *Electric Service* is also a strong driver of overall satisfaction. Mean ratings have decreased significantly since 2008 for the reliability of service, minimizing longer outages, restoring power, and responding to customers.
- ◆ As is typical in satisfaction research, the rates and fees are evaluated least positively. However, ratings for *the monthly service fees and charging reasonable rates* have improved significantly since 2006. The co-op should continue to communicate with members how rates and other charges on the bill are determined, why increases are necessary, and what is being done to keep costs as low as possible and value high.

## BACKGROUND

Vermont Electric Cooperative (VEC) is a consumer-owned electric distribution cooperative headquartered in Johnson, Vermont, with service centers in Grand Isle, Newport, and Richford. VEC currently serves approximately 34,000 members in 74 communities with more than 2,700 miles of distribution line over 2,000 square miles in northern Vermont (Addison, Caledonia, Chittenden, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille, and Orleans Counties).



VEC has regularly conducted residential member satisfaction studies, with the most recent completed in 2009. The results of tracking surveys provide value in two ways: by demonstrating when results remain consistent and by indicating where there has been significant change over time.

The co-op has experienced some recent events that are likely to have an impact on members' attitudes and satisfaction:

- ◆ On January 1, 2010, rates were raised by 1.88%. In addition, tariffs were adjusted in November 2009 which cover line extension charges, pole attachment rates, and other miscellaneous charges. Although the amount of the rate increase was not yet known, members were informed of it at the annual meeting, seven months before it took effect. VEC also informed members through press releases, special member mailings, the website, and a public hearing.
- ◆ The area served by VEC has been impacted by the national economic recession. Financial contingency planning was implemented to mitigate the impact of lower revenue along with a pay freeze and a reduction in benefits for employees.

- ◆ High winds and heavy snow caused a number of power outages this last winter, affecting between 4,500 and 31,900 members.
- ◆ With the first phase of smart meter deployment complete to approximately 80% of VEC members, new service features were rolled out to members. VEC wattWATCHERS is a web-based application that provides hourly and daily consumption information. VEC's redesigned website includes an outage page which includes information about current outages.

## OBJECTIVES

This residential member survey addresses but is not limited to the following informational objectives:

- ◆ Overall Satisfaction: Assess how satisfied members are with Vermont Electric Cooperative.
- ◆ Performance Quality Attributes: Evaluate residential member perceptions of member service and electric service quality on a variety of attributes (e.g., rates, billing, outages, problem resolution, etc.).
- ◆ Performance Quality Trends and Benchmarks: Compare the results to past studies to identify trends and benchmark the results against co-ops nationwide using NRECA's Co-op Norms Database.
- ◆ Prioritizing Improvement and Maintenance Efforts: Determine the key drivers of overall satisfaction and to what degree member needs are being met to help the co-op prioritize any improvement efforts.
- ◆ Member Identity: Determine the proportion of members who identify themselves as member-owners, member-customers, or just customers of the co-op and their propensity to participate in co-op activities.

- ◆ Renewable Energy: Explore member perceptions of renewable energy sources, including how much they would be willing to pay for green power. Also, explore perceptions of generating electricity using nuclear power.
- ◆ Internet and Communications: Explore members' willingness to use online service such as an online newsletter, online outage center, or eBill and their readership of the *Co-op Life* newsletter.
- ◆ Member Demographics and Segmentation: Provide demographics of the membership base and identify differences in attitudes between segments.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Telephone surveying was used as the data collection technique. Interviewers were thoroughly trained on telephone interviewing techniques and on the questionnaire prior to initiating the survey. During this training, the survey instrument was reviewed to ensure that all surveys would be completed in the same manner. A 5% validation re-call was conducted to verify the data collection input. On average, the telephone interviews lasted approximately 11 minutes.

Calls were completed with 376 residential members of Vermont Electric with sampling done proportionate to connect date and district. The member surveys were conducted between June 7<sup>th</sup> and June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2010. The margin of error at the 95% confidence level for the entire sample is plus or minus 5.1 percentage points. This means that a result of 50% in the survey may be between 44.9% and 55.1% if the entire membership were to be interviewed.

## **ANALYSIS**

The graphics presented in this report are based on data collected from the current study and tracking results from the studies conducted in 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009.

Comparisons are also made to results from similar studies conducted by 85 co-ops among more than 28,000 residential members across the nation between January 2007 and June 2010. These “Co-op Norms” are not taken from the universe of all cooperatives; rather these are co-ops who value, monitor and measure the satisfaction of their members and therefore represent higher performing co-ops, not all co-ops.

Sub-segments within each group are also identified on graphs and in the notes under each graph. Differences between member segments, such as differences by age or service tenure, are pointed out and characterized as being either statistically significant or not. When the term “significant” is used, this refers to the certainty of a difference, not the magnitude or size of the difference. Significance is measured at the 95% confidence level, meaning that 95% of the time or more this difference will occur; the difference is likely not a matter of chance due to sampling.

When evaluating the mean ratings in this report, on a 5-point scale a mean of 4.50 or above should be considered “excellent” and a mean between 4.00 and 4.49 is considered “good”. Means below 4.00 may be cause for concern and those below 3.75 indicate problems and a need for improvement.

## KEY FINDINGS

### Overall Satisfaction

Overall satisfaction with VEC among residential members is good. The mean overall satisfaction rating is 8.12 on a 10-point scale and almost half give ratings of “9” or “10”.

- The mean overall satisfaction rating does not differ significantly from the 2009 study (8.11) or most of the previous studies. The exception is the 2006 study when the mean overall satisfaction rating was lower, at 7.79. The 2010 mean rating is lower than the Co-op Norms (8.77).
- Member segments that give significantly higher ratings for their overall satisfaction include those in smaller households, retired members, those paying lower monthly electric bills, and less affluent members.
- Additionally, residential members in District 16 are most satisfied, significantly more satisfied than those in District 12.

### Performance Quality Attributes

Members were asked to evaluate 22 performance quality attributes related to customer service, image, electric service, communication, billing and cost. On 16 of the attributes measured, the mean ratings exceed 4.00, a “good” rating on a 5-point scale. However, none of the mean ratings are above the excellent threshold of 4.50.

- VEC is rated positively on many of the attributes, with the highest mean ratings for the following. More than eight in ten members rate each of these attributes positively (rating of “4” or “5”).
  - *Having highly-trained, professional employees (4.39)*
  - *Courtesy, understanding and helpfulness of employees to members’ inquiries or problems (4.39)*
  - *The accuracy of meter reading and billing (4.37)*
  - *Providing accurate and easy to understand bills (4.32)*

- *Having convenient payment options* (4.32)
- *Providing consistent voltage without surges or brownouts* (4.30)
- *Overall customer service they provide* (4.30)
- The attributes on which VEC is rated least well are *the monthly service fees* (53% rating “4” or “5”), *charging reasonable rates* (54%), and *helping customers keep bills as low as possible* (62%). With mean ratings below 3.75, this may be cause for concern. However, it should be noted that these are areas that are typically rated lower in cooperative satisfaction research, especially when there has been a recent rate increase.

## Performance Quality Trends and Benchmarks

**Mean ratings and top two-box ratings on almost all of the comparable performance attributes do not differ significantly from 2009. Just one of the attributes significantly declined.**

- While none of the mean ratings have improved significantly from 2009, there are a number of attributes that have improved significantly from studies done before 2009:
  - *Operating with concern for the environment* (compared to 2003)
  - *Supporting the local community* (compared to 2003 and 2006)
  - *Having consumers’ best interests at heart* (compared to 2003)
  - *Keeping the number of longer outages to a minimum* (compared to 2006)
  - *The restoration of power after an outage* (compared to 2006)
  - *Keeping members informed on the status of outages* (compared to 2006)
  - *Delivering good value for the money* (compared to 2003 and 2006)
  - *Charging reasonable rates* (compared to 2003 and 2006)
  - *The monthly service fees* (compared to 2006)
  - *Having convenient payment options* (compared to 2003)
  - *Helping customers keep bills as low as possible* (compared to 2003)
- The mean rating for *providing consistent voltage without surges or brownouts* has declined significantly since 2009 (from 4.44 to 4.30).

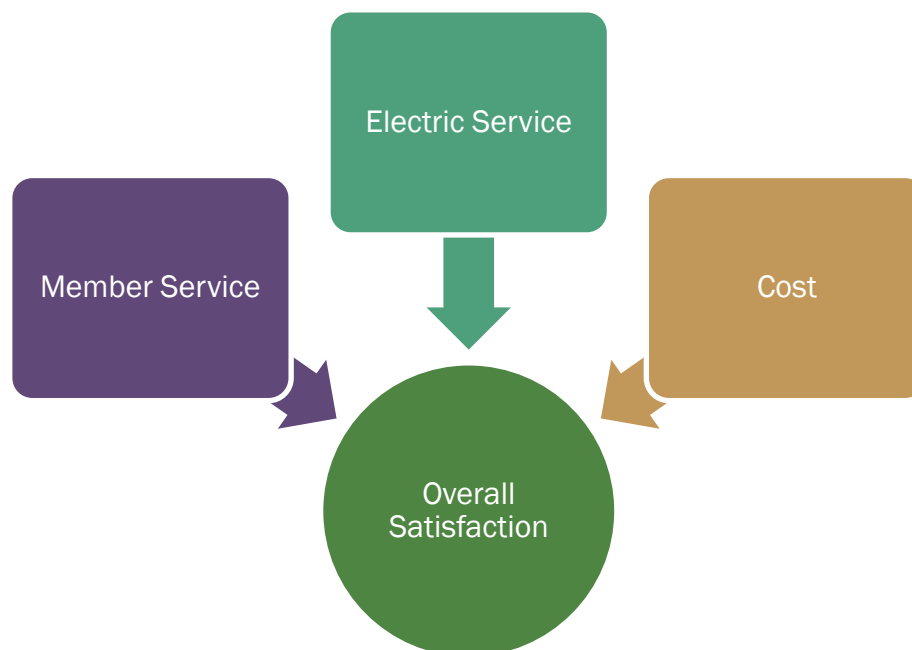


- There have also been some significant decreases since studies prior to 2009. These include:
  - *The speed and efficiency of responding to customers* (compared to 2008)
  - *Operating with concern for the environment* (compared to 2005 and 2007)
  - *Having consumers' best interests at heart* (compared to 2005)
  - *The reliability of service and frequency of interruptions* (compared to 2005 and 2008)
  - *Providing consistent voltage* (compared to 2005)
  - *Keeping blinks and momentary outages to a minimum* (compared to 2005)
  - *Keeping the number of longer outages to a minimum* (compared to 2005 and 2008)
  - *The restoration of power after an outage* (compared to 2005 and 2008)
  
- VEC receives lower ratings than the Co-op Norms on all of the performance attributes. The attributes with the biggest gaps include:

<i>Attribute</i>	<i>VEC Mean Rating</i>	<i>Co-op Norms Mean Rating</i>	<i>Gap</i>
<i>Supporting the local community</i>	4.03	4.53	<b>-0.50</b>
<i>Restoration of power after an outage</i>	3.97	4.47	<b>-0.50</b>
<i>Charging reasonable rates</i>	3.46	3.88	<b>-0.42</b>
<i>Delivering good value for the money</i>	3.80	4.19	<b>-0.39</b>
<i>Speed and efficiency of responding to customers</i>	4.17	4.53	<b>-0.36</b>
<i>Keeping the number of longer outages to a minimum</i>	4.14	4.49	<b>-0.35</b>
<i>Operating with concern for the environment</i>	4.13	4.47	<b>-0.34</b>
<i>Having consumers' best interests at heart</i>	4.02	4.35	<b>-0.33</b>

## Prioritizing Improvement and Maintenance Efforts

The key drivers of overall satisfaction among residential members are *Member Service*, *Electric Service*, and *Cost*. Going forward, these are the areas that VEC should focus on most.



- The strongest driver of overall satisfaction is the Member Service factor – *the courtesy, understanding and helpfulness of employees to your inquiries or problems; having highly-trained, professional employees; resolving any issues or problems; overall customer service provided; the speed and efficiency of responding to customers; and having consumers’ best interests at heart*. The mean ratings for all six attributes are above the “good” threshold of 4.00 and do not differ significantly from the 2009 study. However, there is room for improvement as ratings are lower than the Co-op Norms. Improvements in this area will have the strongest effect on overall satisfaction.
  - The proportion of members who report having contacted VEC in the past year (56%) is significantly lower than in 2008. Members who contacted the co-op because of an outage evaluate the contact least positively while those who made contact for a bill issue or to have their electricity disconnected or reconnected evaluate the contact most positively.

- Members are significantly less likely to evaluate their contact as having been “better than expected” compared to the 2009 study and the Co-op Norms. Overall satisfaction with the cooperative declines quickly as contact evaluations become less positive. Those who evaluate their contact as having been “much better than expected” are actually much more satisfied than those who did not contact the co-op at all (mean rating of 8.73). VEC should continue to work toward a goal of one contact issue resolution.
- The Electric Service factor – *keeping blinks and momentary outages to a minimum, the reliability of service and frequency of interruptions, keeping the number of longer outages to a minimum, providing consistent voltage without surges or brownouts, the restoration of power after an outage, and the speed and efficiency of responding to customers* – is the next driver of overall satisfaction. This is another area in which VEC has been doing well but there is room for improvement. Ratings for five of the six attributes are above 4.00 and minimizing longer outages and restoring power are rated significantly higher in 2010 than in 2006. However, ratings are lower than the Co-op Norms and have decreased significantly since 2008 for the reliability of service, minimizing longer outages, restoring power, and responding to customers.
- *Charging reasonable rates, the monthly service fees, helping customers keep bills as low as possible, and having consumers’ best interests at heart* make up the Cost factor, the final driver of overall satisfaction. This is the area in which VEC has the most room for improvement, which is not surprising due to the recent rate increase along with a struggling economy. The mean ratings are below 4.00 on three of the four attributes and are lower than the Co-op Norms. However, ratings for *the monthly service fees* and *charging reasonable rates* have improved significantly since 2006.
  - Most of the members are not aware of how their rates compare to other electric companies in the region or feel they are higher. Approximately one-quarter believe their rates are lower (7%) or about the same (20%).
  - A regression analysis was also conducted to determine the key drivers of value. It was found that five factors or attributes are significant drivers of value: Cost,

*Member Service, Electric Service, the accuracy of meter reading and billing, and communicating with members and keeping them informed.* So, while the perception of rates and costs has the greatest impact on the value members feel they receive, it is not the only factor that enters into the “value equation” among members of VEC.

- For more information on how the factors were formed and key drivers of satisfaction were derived, see the appendix.

## **Member Identity**

**Member identity does not differ significantly from past studies, but is lower than the Co-op Norms. Thirty percent say they view themselves as member-owners or both member-owners and customers of the cooperative, as opposed to being a customer only.**

- Those with member identity give more positive evaluations than do “customers” on almost all of the 22 performance attributes with four of the differences being statistically significant. Overall satisfaction is also higher among “members” than “customers” but the difference is not significant.
- In addition to the performance attributes, “members” are significantly more likely to participate in cooperative activities like voting in elections, have visited the co-op’s website, and read all of the quarterly newsletter *Co-op Life*.
- Approximately four in ten members say they have voted in a co-op election in the past year, 6% spoke with a Director, and 2% attended the annual meeting. More than half of the members did not participate in any of these activities in the past year.

## Renewable Energy

Members continue to feel it is important for the cooperative to provide environmentally friendly green power, especially from hydro, wind, or solar. Additionally, 58% say they are willing to pay an additional amount to get green power.

- One-third indicate they would not be willing to pay any additional amount on their electric bills to get green power, but 29% say they would be willing to pay an additional \$15 to \$20 more per month.
- Fully four in ten support the use of electricity generated in part by nuclear power, while nearly the same proportion are against it. It is interesting to note that respondents are typically either entirely for (“5” rating) or against (“1”) using nuclear power, or are unsure about how they feel (“3”). There are very few who are “in the gray” area, giving a rating of “4” or “2”.

## Internet and Communications

More than seven in ten residential members indicate they have Internet access, either at home or work or both places. Of those with Internet access, approximately one-third have visited VEC’s website, 69% are aware of eBill, and 24% are aware of VEC’s online outage center.

- The vast majority of those with Internet access at home have a higher speed access such as cable, satellite, or DSL service.
- Members with Internet access are most interested in reading the quarterly newsletter as an e-newsletter, followed by reviewing and/or paying their electric bills online through eBill.
- One-quarter indicate they read all of the co-op’s quarterly newsletter *Co-op Life*. An additional one-quarter say they read most of it.

## Member Demographics and Segmentation

Half of the residential members are employed full-time, 61% live alone or with one other person, 49% have an annual household income over \$50,000, and 64% have been served by the co-op for 10 years or more. This is consistent with previous studies.

- Although not all the differences are statistically significant, those paying lower monthly electric bills, those living in smaller households (especially those living alone), retired members, and less affluent members tend to evaluate VEC more positively than do their counterparts.
- Although few of the differences are statistically significant, those in District 19 most often give the highest ratings while those in District 12 tend to be least positive. Members in District 19 are also the most likely to have participated in at least one of the tested activities in the past year, especially voting in a co-op election.
- Newer members, more affluent members, those working full- or part-time, and those living in larger households are significantly more likely to have Internet access, more interested in online services such as eBill, and more likely to pay an additional amount for green power. On the other hand, longer-tenured members and retired members are significantly more likely to read *Co-op Life* thoroughly and to be in favor of electricity generation using nuclear power.

## Verbatim Comments

At the conclusion of the survey, members were given the opportunity to share any comments, concerns, or questions they had. Forty-five percent of the respondents offered input and most of the comments were positive or neutral.

- Among those who commented, the following table provides a breakdown of the subjects mentioned and the number of comments that were positive, negative, or neutral:

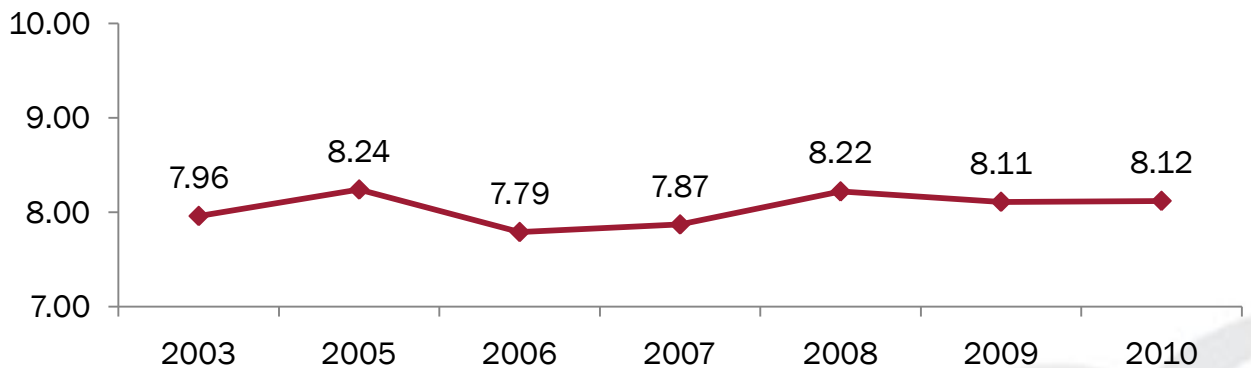
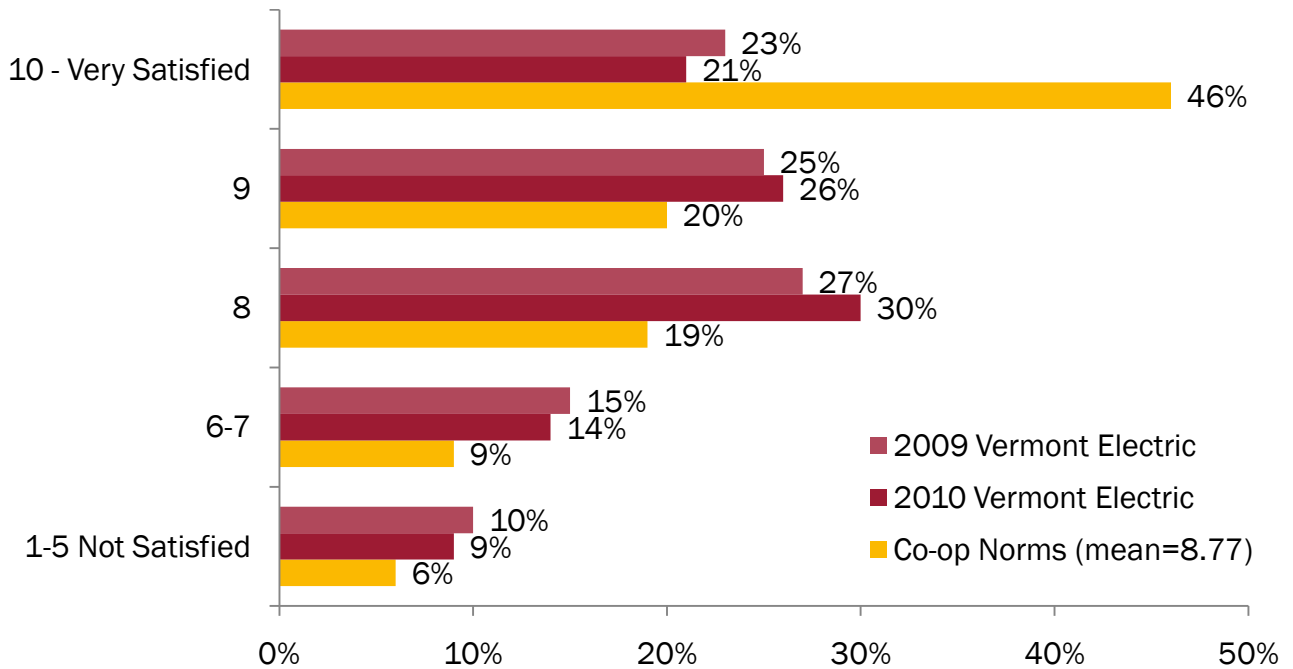
<i>Subject/Topic</i>	<i>Total # Comments</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neutral</i>
<i>Overall Satisfaction</i>	67	63	4	0
<i>Operations/Engineers – Blinks, outages, tree trimming, AMI/AMR</i>	36	9	22	5
<i>Rates/Fees</i>	35	2	28	5
<i>Member Services/Marketing – Resolving issues, customer service reps</i>	16	5	8	3
<i>Problems With Bills</i>	11	3	5	3
<i>Energy Efficiency/Energy Audits</i>	4	0	0	4
<i>Newsletter/Information</i>	3	0	0	3
<i>Annual Meeting</i>	2	1	0	1
<i>Management/Board</i>	2	1	0	1

- As would be expected, the majority of comments about rates and fees are negative rather than positive, but some are neutral, including comments about the co-op keeping costs down.

- Overall Satisfaction
- Elements of Satisfaction
- Key Drivers of Satisfaction and Value



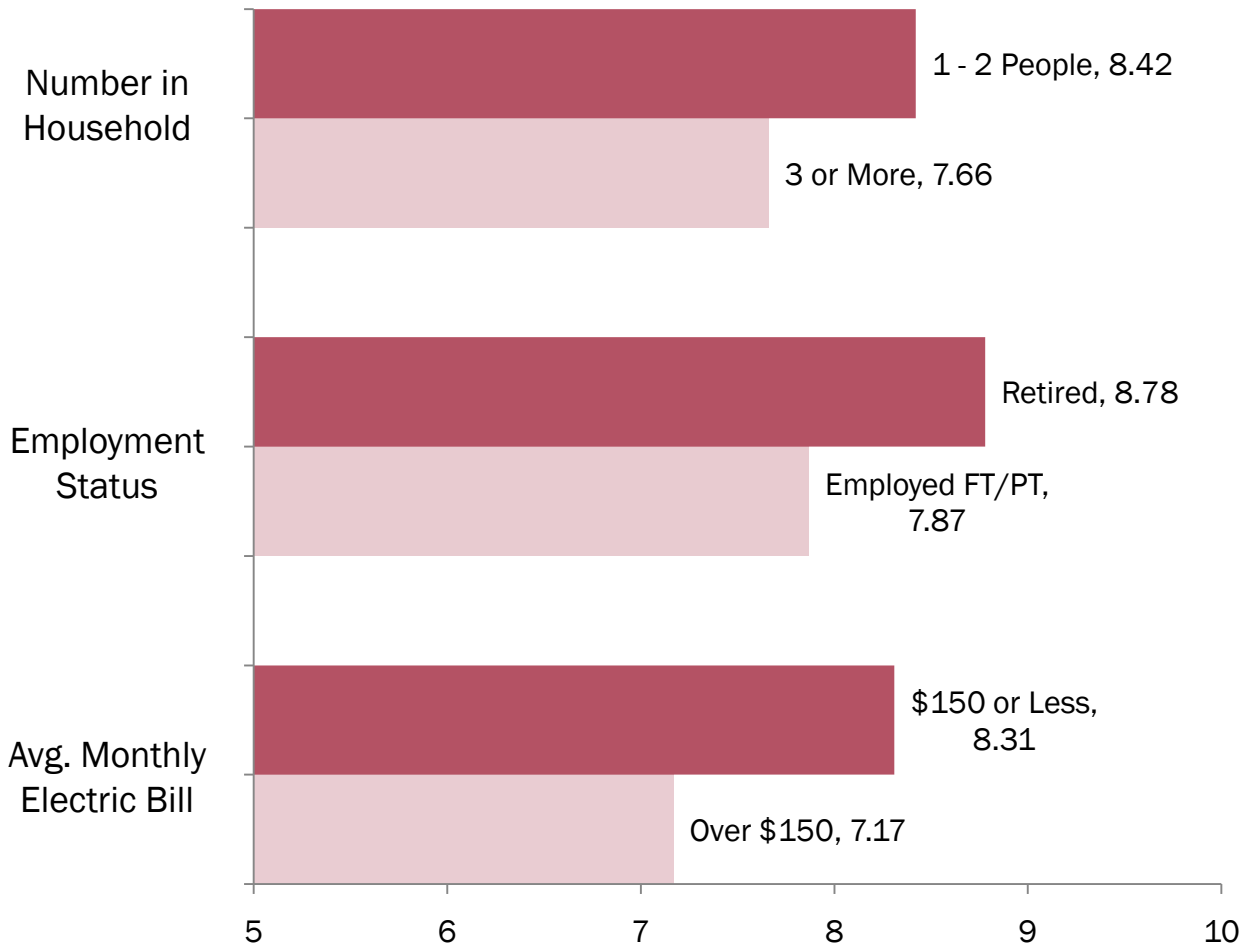
# Overall Satisfaction With Vermont Electric Cooperative



Please consider all your experiences to date with Vermont Electric. Using a 10-point scale on which 1 means “very dissatisfied” and 10 means “very satisfied,” how satisfied are you with Vermont Electric Cooperative?

- Overall satisfaction among Vermont Electric Cooperative’s members is good with a mean satisfaction rating of 8.12 and almost half giving ratings of “9” (26%) or “10 – very satisfied” (21%). Just 9% give a rating of “5” or less, indicating they are not satisfied.
- VEC’s mean satisfaction rating is lower than the Co-op Norms (8.77).
- Members’ overall satisfaction in 2010 does not differ significantly from past studies except 2006 when the mean rating was significantly lower.

# Mean Overall Satisfaction by Member Segment



Please consider all your experiences to date with Vermont Electric. Using a 10-point scale on which 1 means “very dissatisfied” and 10 means “very satisfied,” how satisfied are you with Vermont Electric Cooperative?

- Member segments that differ the most in their ratings of overall satisfaction are graphed above.
- Members living alone or with one other person, retired members, and those with lower monthly electric bills are significantly more satisfied with VEC than their individual counterparts.
- Additionally, members with lower household incomes are significantly more satisfied than are those who are more affluent.
- By location, members in District 16 (8.45) are most satisfied, significantly more satisfied than members in District 12 (7.66).

# Customer Service Performance Ratings

1-5 Scale: 1 = Very Poor; 5 = Excellent

Top 2 Box – “4” and “5” Graphed

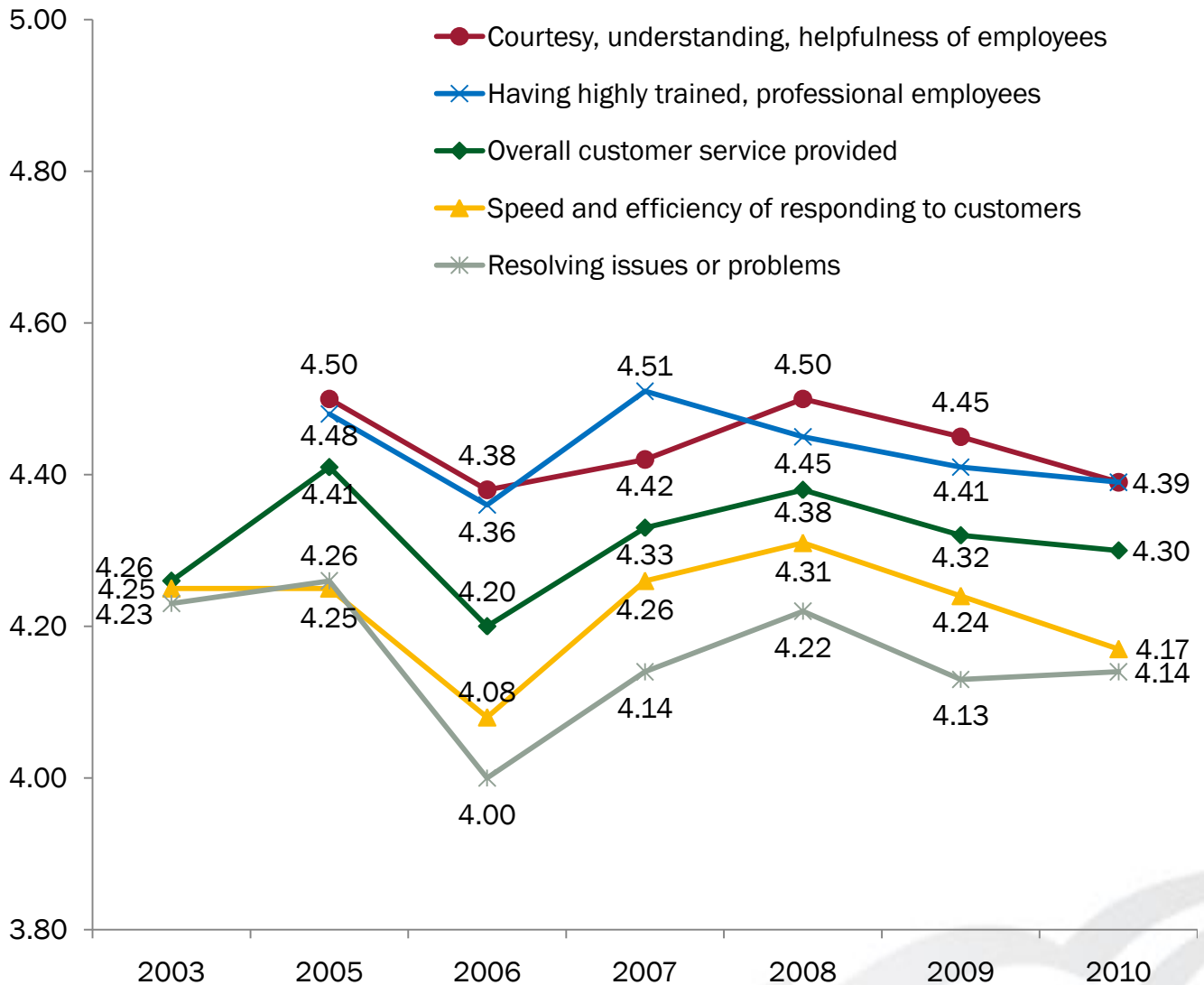


On a 5-point scale where 1 means “very poor” and 5 means “excellent,” how would you rate Vermont Electric Co-op’s performance on the following.

- Eight in ten or more members evaluate VEC positively (ratings of “4” or “5” on a 5-point scale) on the five attributes related to customer service.
- Additionally, more than four in ten give excellent ratings (rating of “5”) on these attributes.

# Customer Service Performance Trends

Mean Ratings Graphed  
1 to 5 Scale, 1 = Very Poor, 5 = Excellent

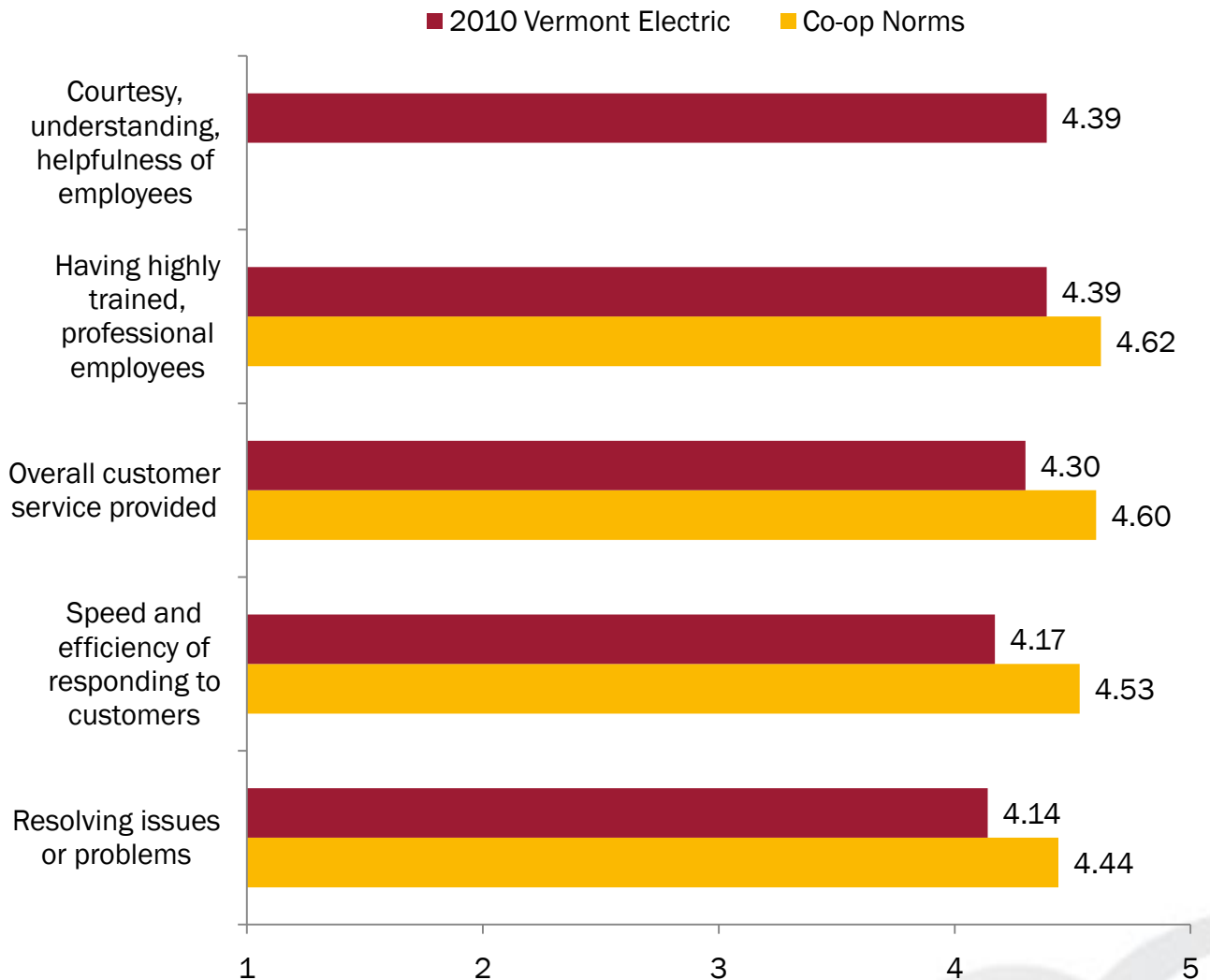


On a 5-point scale where 1 means “very poor” and 5 means “excellent,” how would you rate Vermont Electric Co-op’s performance on the following.

- None of the mean ratings for the customer service performance attributes differ significantly from the 2009 study.
- The rating for *the speed and efficiency of responding to customers* is significantly lower in 2010 than in 2008.

# Customer Service Performance Benchmarks

Mean Ratings Graphed Compared to Co-op Norms  
1 to 5 Scale, 1 = Very Poor, 5 = Excellent



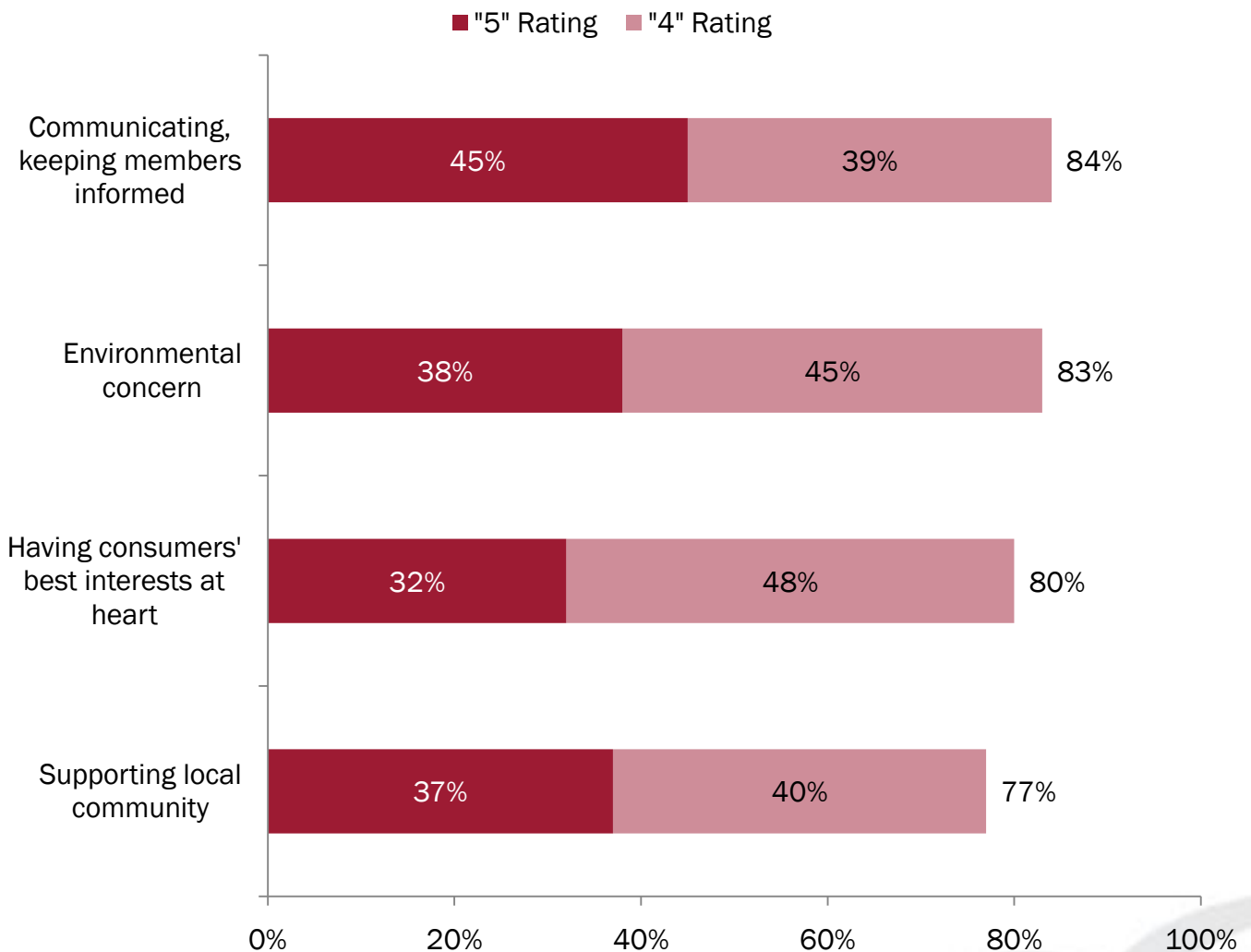
On a 5-point scale where 1 means "very poor" and 5 means "excellent," how would you rate Vermont Electric Co-op's performance on the following.

- The mean ratings among VEC members are lower than the Co-op Norms for all the customer service-related attributes.
- The difference is greatest for *the speed and efficiency of responding to customers* (.36 mean difference).

# Image, Communication and Trust Ratings

1-5 Scale: 1 = Very Poor; 5 = Excellent

Top 2 Box – “4” and “5” Graphed

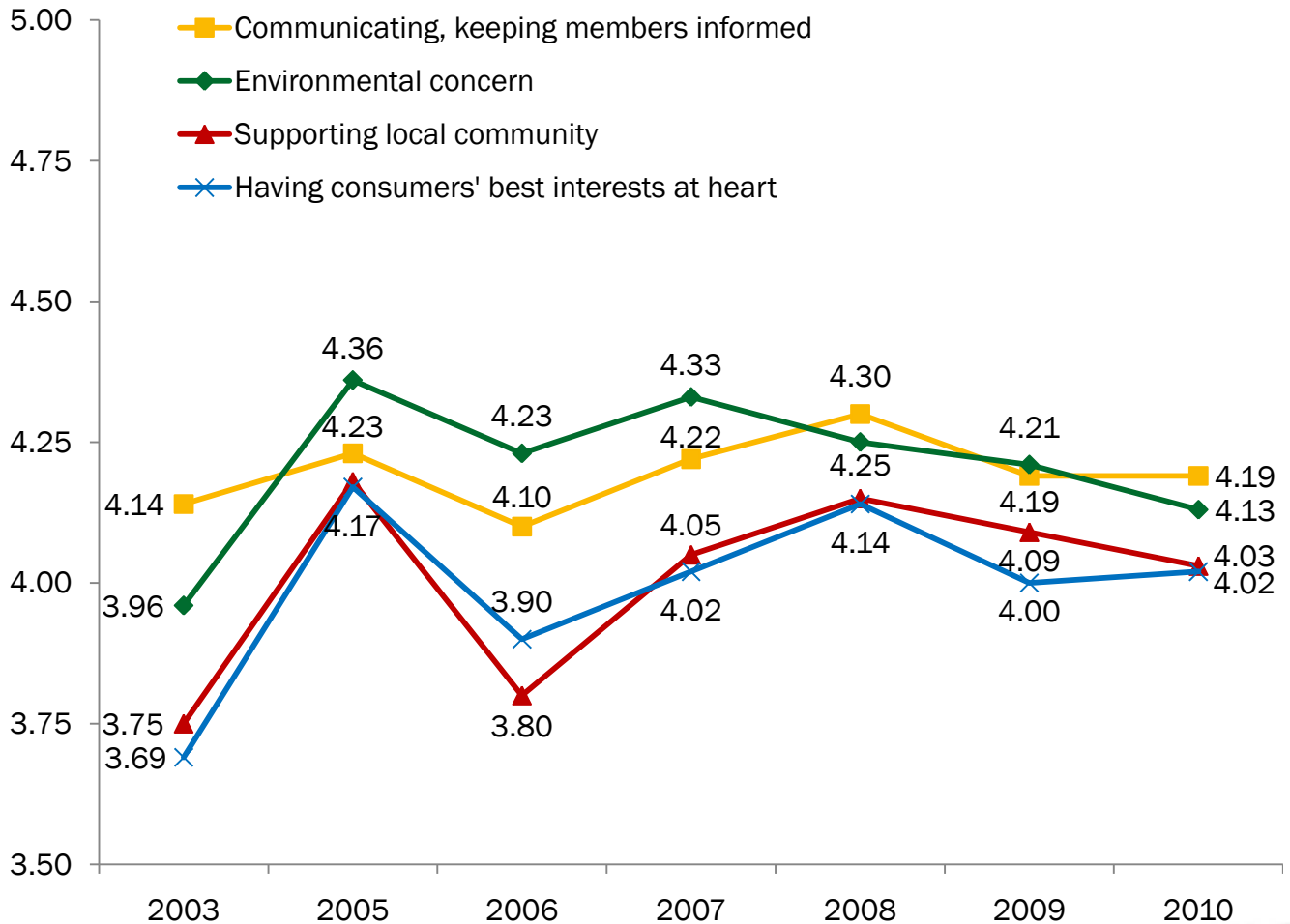


On a 5-point scale where 1 means “very poor” and 5 means “excellent,” how would you rate Vermont Electric Co-op’s performance on the following.

- Vermont is also evaluated well in this area, with more than three-quarters giving positive ratings on all of the attributes.
- Between 32% and 45% rate the co-op as excellent (“5”) on these attributes.

# Image, Communication and Trust Trends

Mean Ratings Graphed  
1 to 5 Scale, 1 = Very Poor, 5 = Excellent

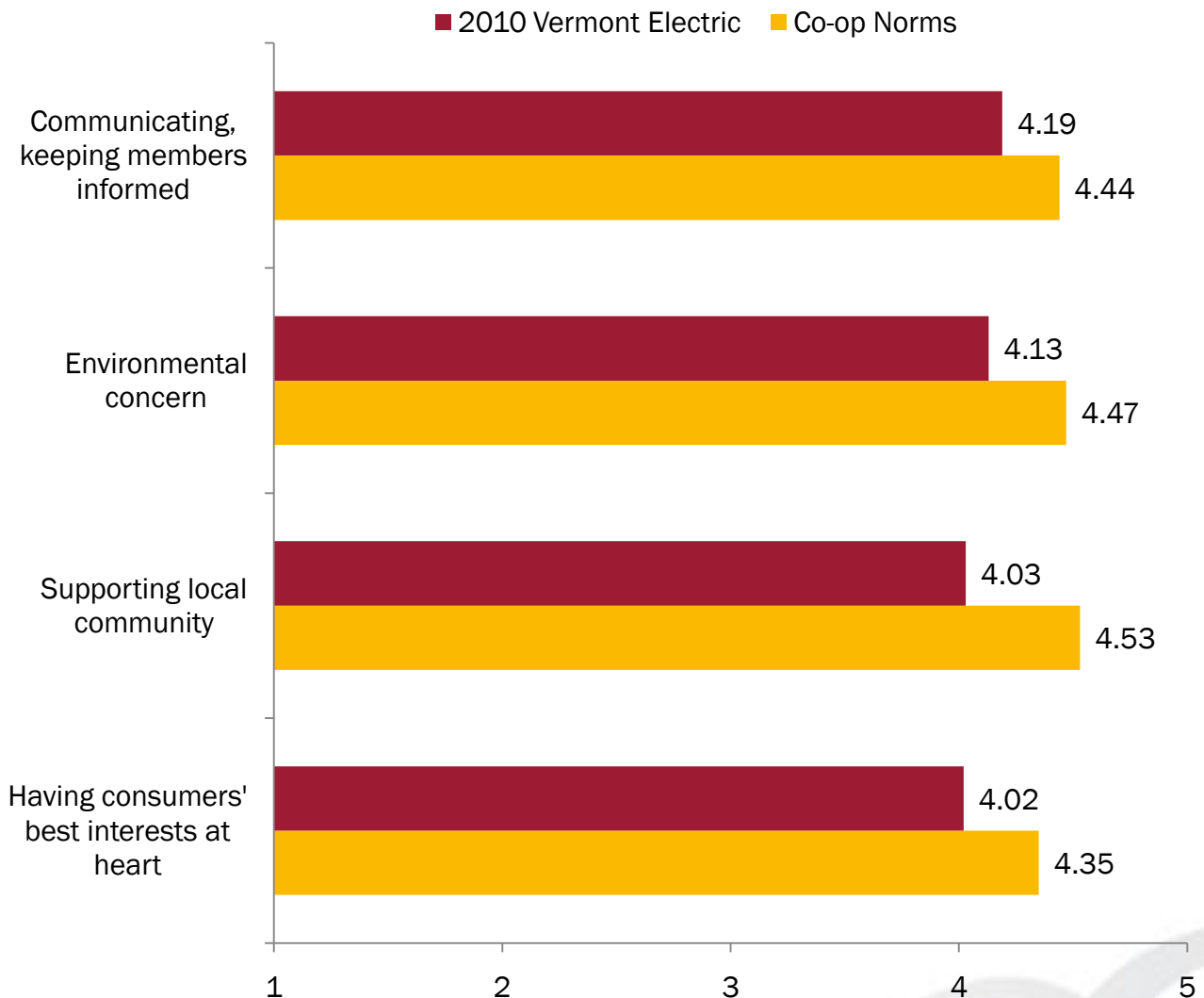


On a 5-point scale where 1 means "very poor" and 5 means "excellent," how would you rate Vermont Electric Co-op's performance on the following.

- Mean ratings for these four attributes are very similar to the 2009 study.
- The mean rating for *operating with concern for the environment* is significantly lower in 2010 than in 2007 and 2005.
- *Operating with concern for the environment, supporting the local community, and having consumers' best interests at heart* are evaluated significantly more positively than in 2003. *Supporting the local community* is also evaluated significantly more positively than in 2006.

# Image, Communication and Trust Benchmarks

Mean Ratings Graphed Compared to Co-op Norms  
1 to 5 Scale, 1 = Very Poor, 5 = Excellent



On a 5-point scale where 1 means “very poor” and 5 means “excellent,” how would you rate Vermont Electric Co-op’s performance on the following.

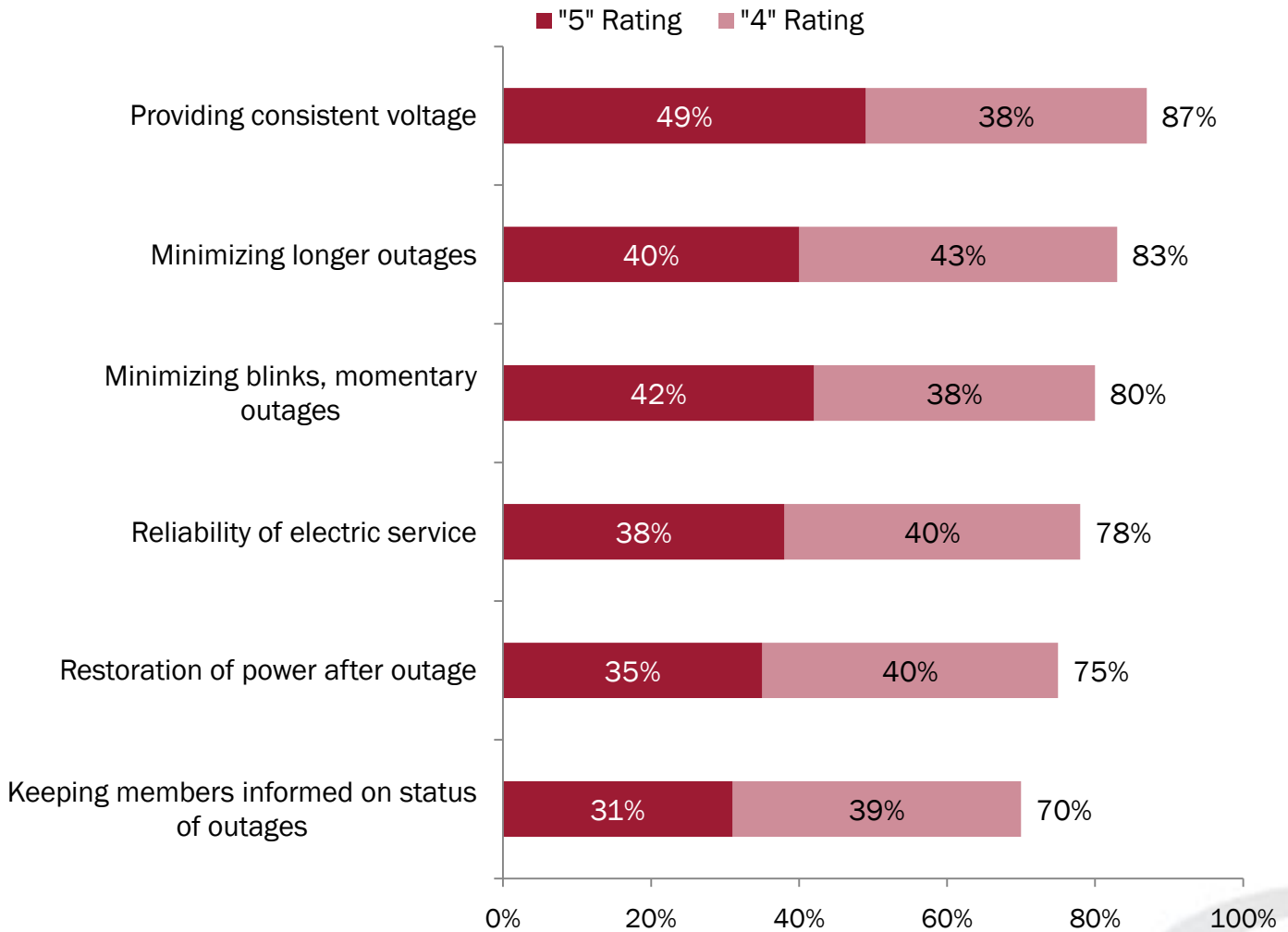
- The mean ratings among VEC members are lower than the Co-op Norms.
- The difference is greatest for *supporting the local community*.



# Electric Service Performance Ratings

1-5 Scale: 1 = Very Poor; 5 = Excellent

Top 2 Box – “4” and “5” Graphed

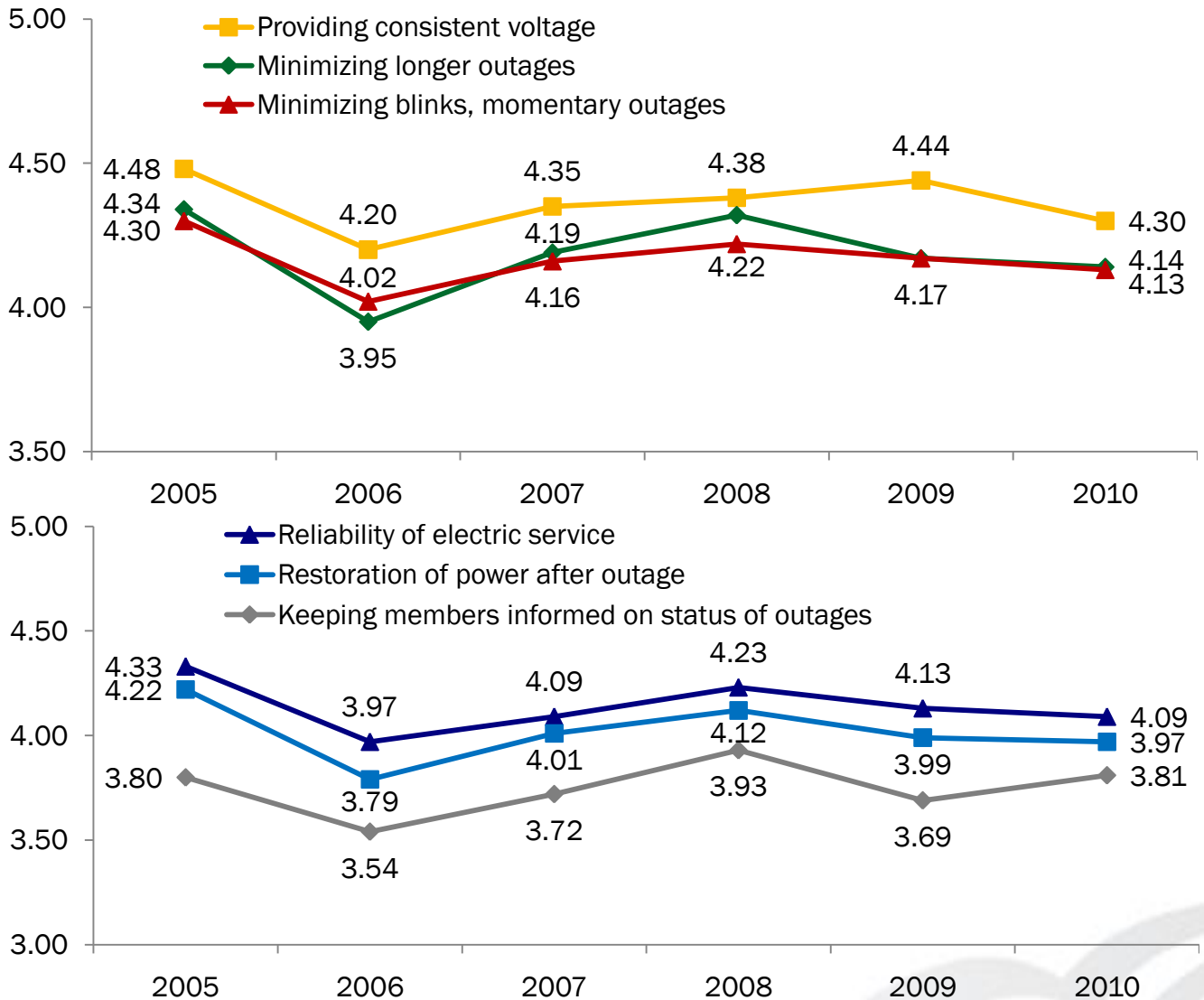


On a 5-point scale where 1 means “very poor” and 5 means “excellent,” how would you rate Vermont Electric Co-op’s performance on the following.

- Eight in ten or more VEC members give positive ratings for *providing consistent voltage*, *keeping longer outages to a minimum*, and *keeping blinks and momentary outages to a minimum*.
- *Keeping members informed on the status of outages* is rated lower, but still positively, with seven in ten giving top two-box ratings.

# Electric Service Performance Trends

Mean Ratings Graphed  
1 to 5 Scale, 1 = Very Poor, 5 = Excellent

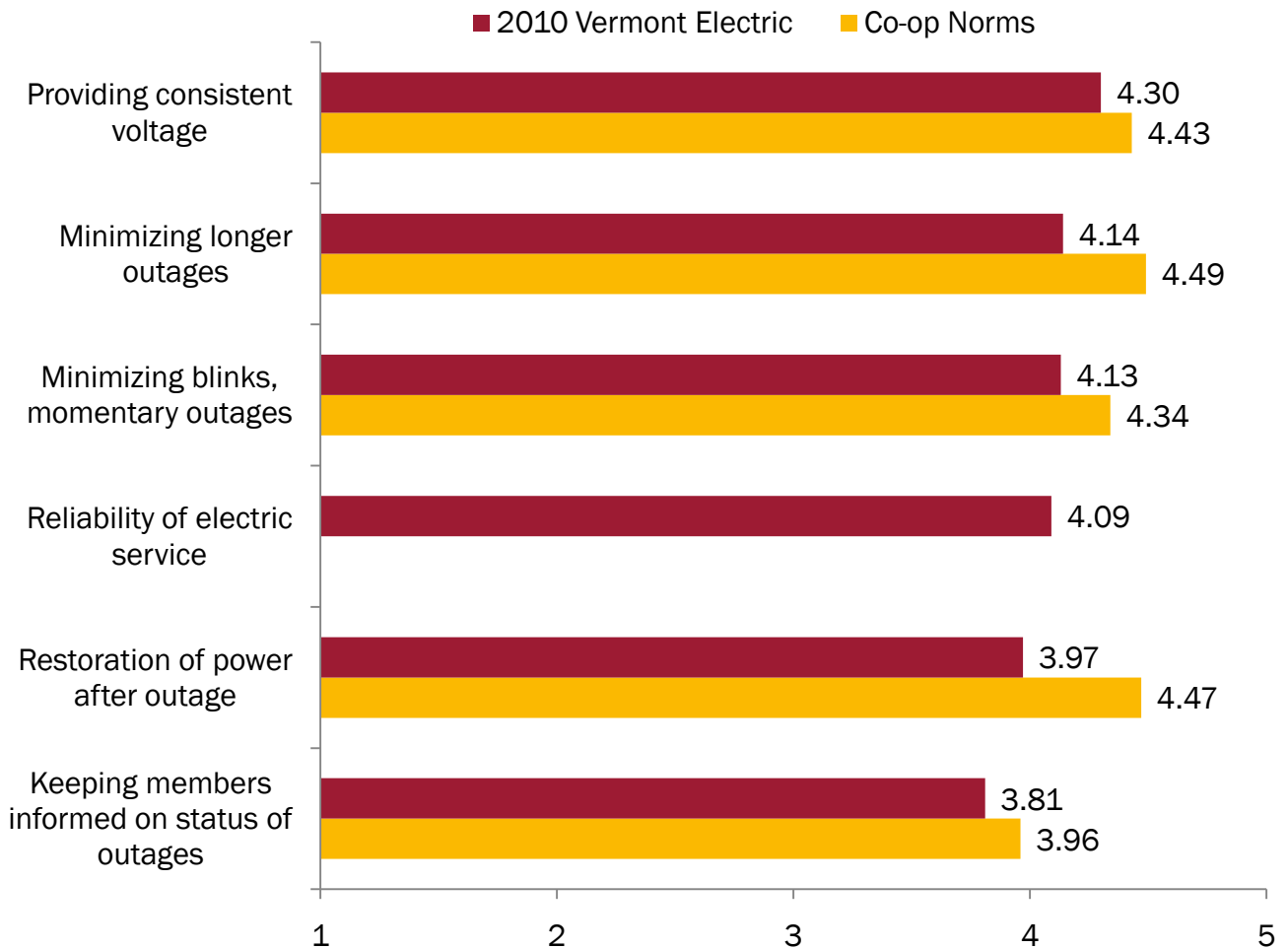


On a 5-point scale where 1 means "very poor" and 5 means "excellent," how would you rate Vermont Electric Co-op's performance on the following.

- The mean rating for *providing consistent voltage without surges or brownouts* has decreased significantly since 2009.
- Compared to 2008, ratings are significantly lower for *the reliability of service and frequency of interruptions, the restoration of power after an outage, and keeping the number of longer outages to a minimum.*
- Most of these attributes are evaluated less positively than in 2005 but more positively than in 2006 with many of the differences being statistically significant.

# Electric Service Performance Benchmarks

Mean Ratings Graphed Compared to Co-op Norms  
1 to 5 Scale, 1 = Very Poor, 5 = Excellent



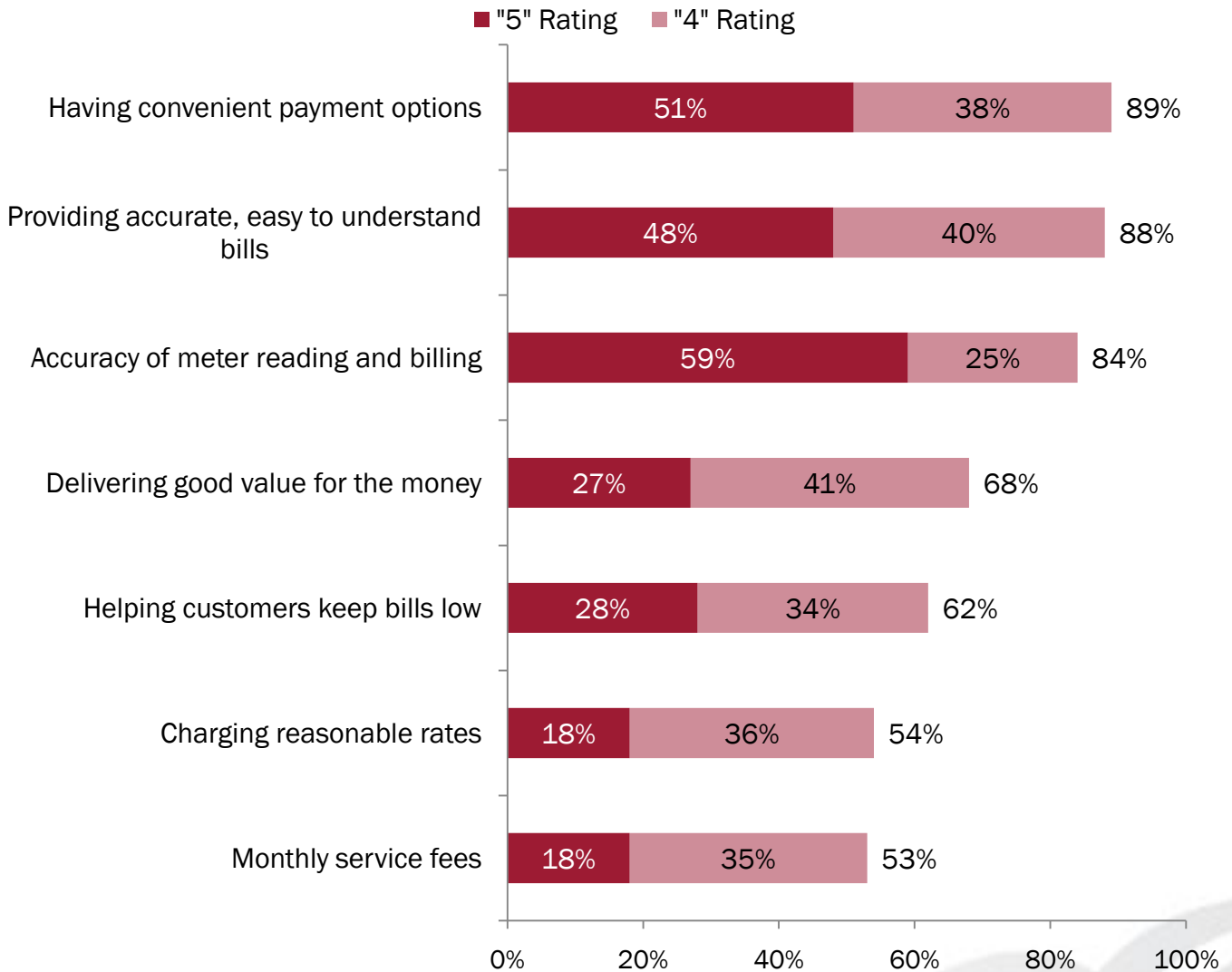
On a 5-point scale where 1 means “very poor” and 5 means “excellent,” how would you rate Vermont Electric Co-op’s performance on the following.

- VEC receives lower ratings than the Co-op Norms for the electric service-related attributes.
- The greatest difference is for *the restoration of power after an outage*.

# Billing and Cost Ratings

1-5 Scale: 1 = Very Poor; 5 = Excellent

Top 2 Box – “4” and “5” Graphed

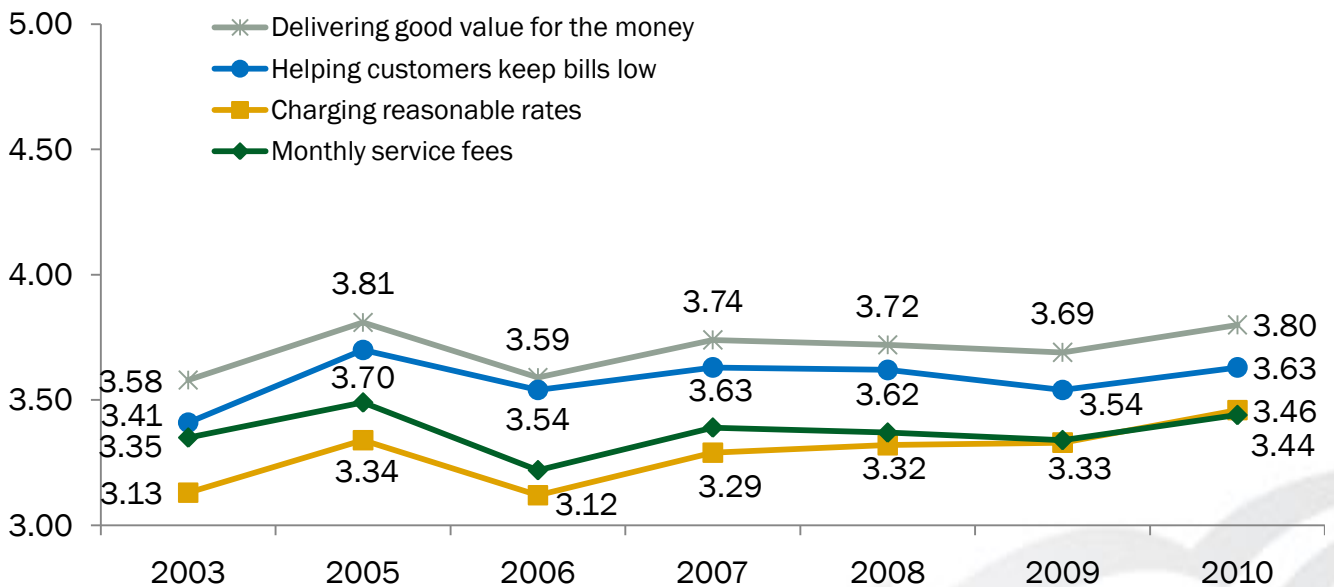
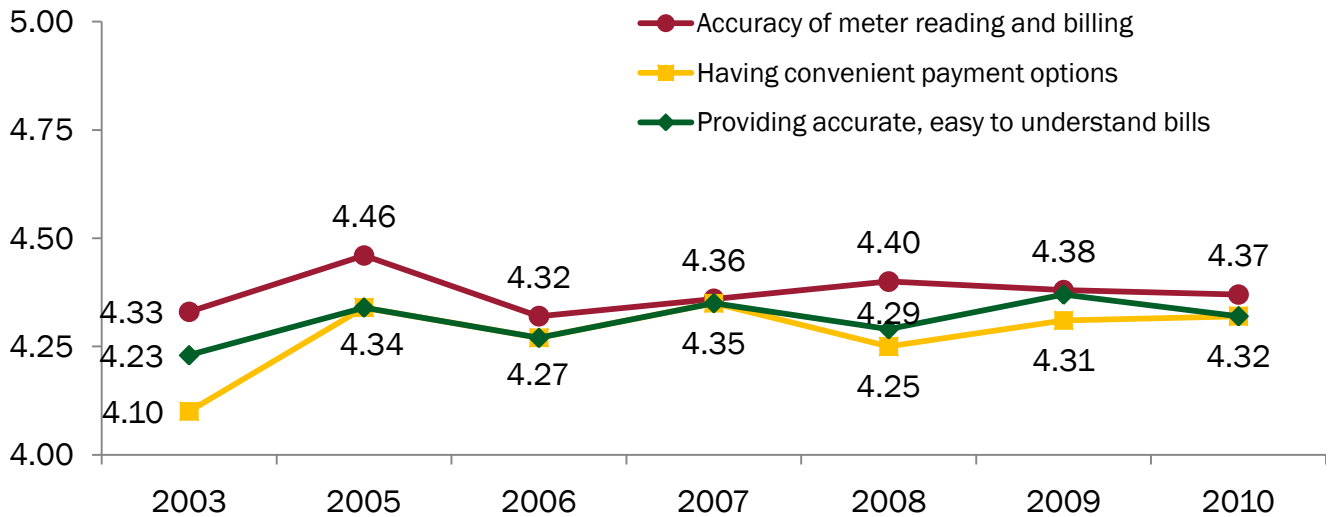


On a 5-point scale where 1 means “very poor” and 5 means “excellent,” how would you rate Vermont Electric Co-op’s performance on the following.

- Vermont Electric Cooperative receives high ratings for their billings; approximately nine in ten give positive ratings and half rate the co-op as being excellent on *having convenient payment options* and *providing accurate and easy to understand bills*. Nearly six in ten rate the co-op as excellent on *the accuracy of meter reading and billing*.
- Evaluations of the *monthly service fees* and *charging reasonable rates* are lower, which is typical in member satisfaction surveys.

# Billing and Cost Trends

Mean Ratings Graphed  
1 to 5 Scale, 1 = Very Poor, 5 = Excellent



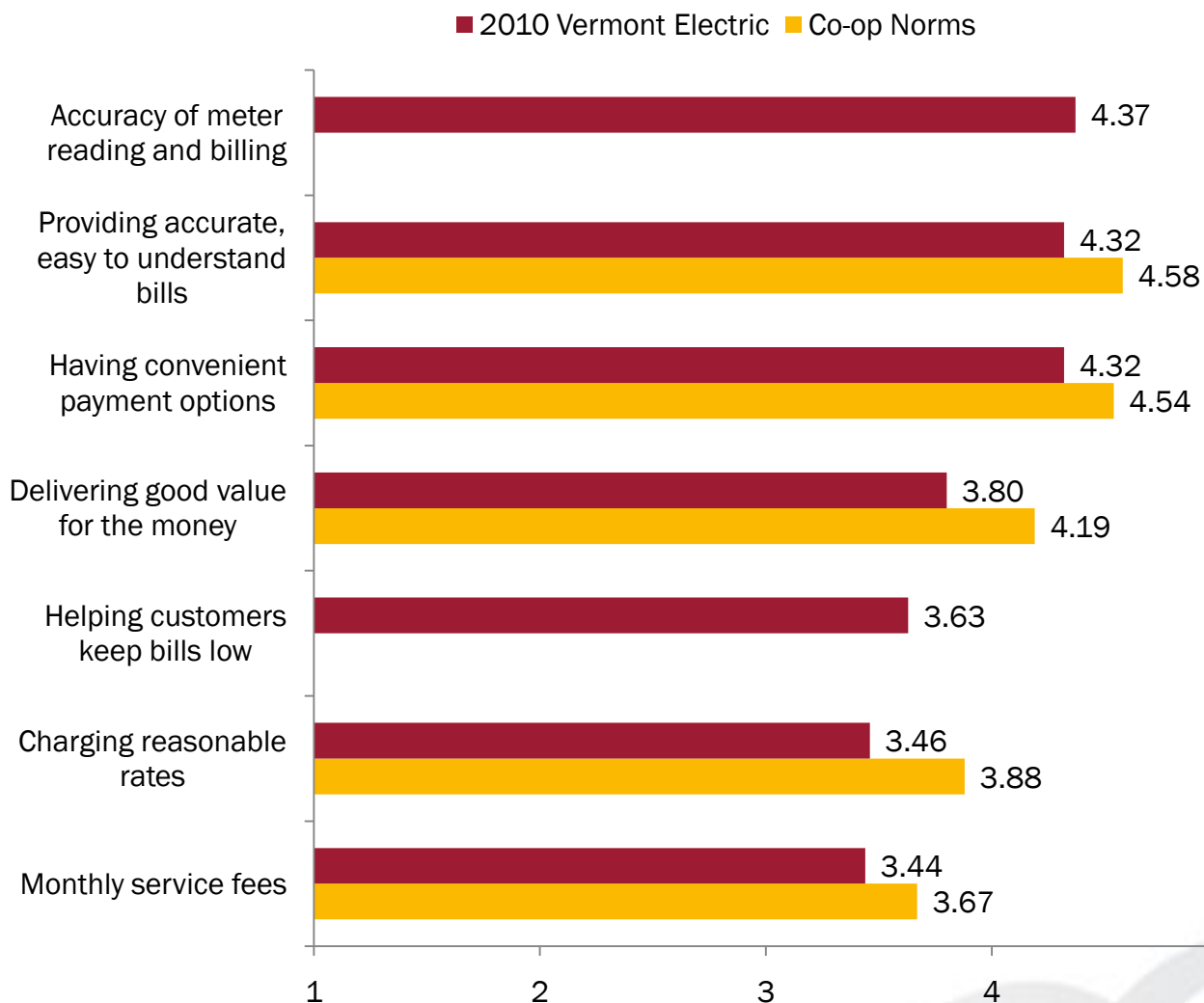
On a 5-point scale where 1 means “very poor” and 5 means “excellent,” how would you rate Vermont Electric Co-op’s performance on the following.

- Mean ratings are either slightly higher or consistent with 2009, although no change is statistically significant.
- Mean ratings on these attributes are higher than they were in the 2003 and 2006 studies, with many of the improvements being statistically significant.

# Billing and Cost Benchmarks

Mean Ratings Graphed Compared to Co-op Norms

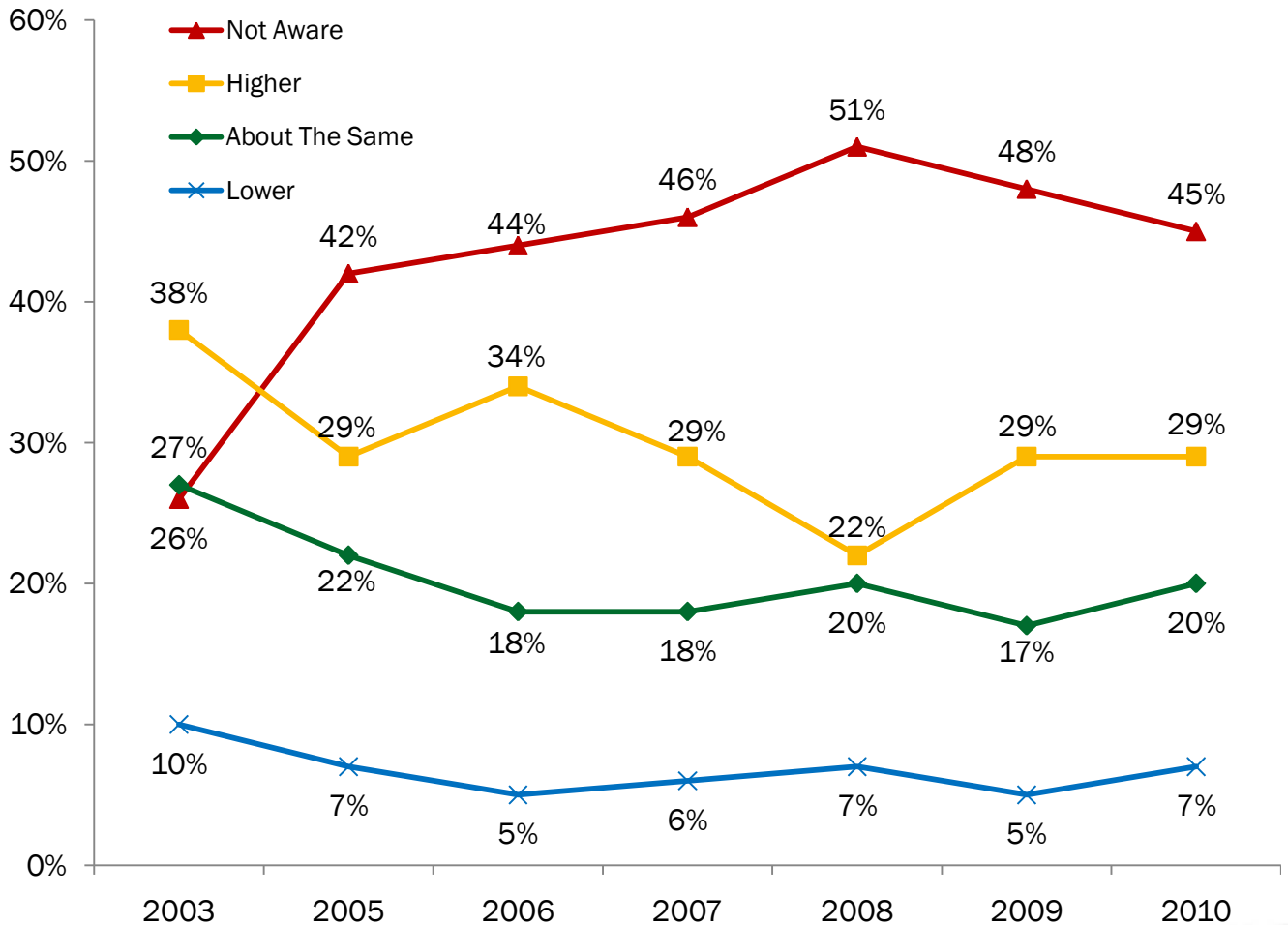
1 to 5 Scale, 1 = Very Poor, 5 = Excellent



On a 5-point scale where 1 means “very poor” and 5 means “excellent,” how would you rate Vermont Electric Co-op’s performance on the following.

- Vermont Electric Cooperative is rated lower than the Co-op Norms on most of these attributes.
- The differences are greatest for *charging reasonable rates* and *delivering good value for the money*.

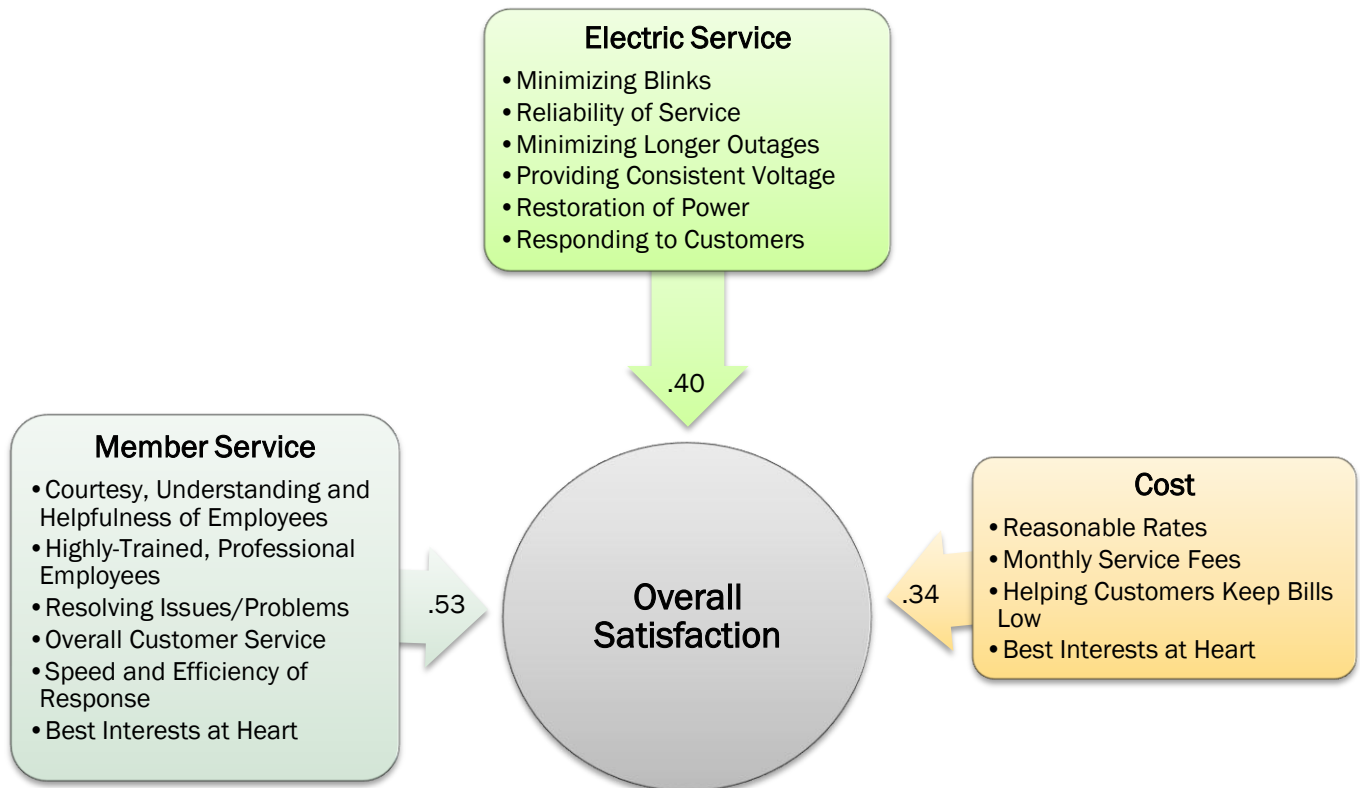
# Comparison of VEC Rates to Other Companies



Compared to other electric companies, would you say Vermont Electric's rates are higher, lower, about the same or you aren't aware?

- Forty-five percent of the members surveyed are not aware of how their electric rates compare to other companies.
- Three in ten feel their electric rates are higher, two in ten feel they are about the same, and 7% say they are lower than other electric companies.
- This does not differ significantly from past surveys, except the 2003 survey.

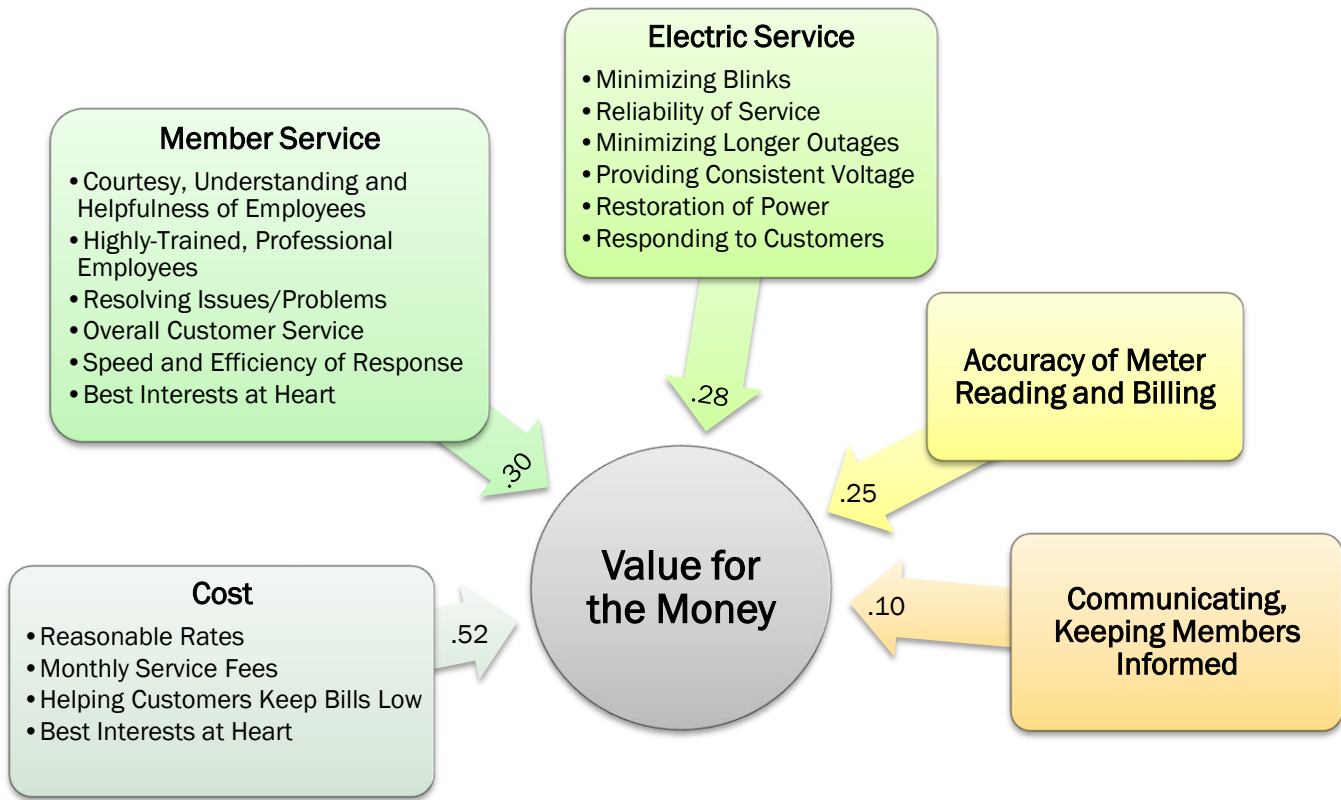
# Key Drivers of Overall Satisfaction



- Regression analysis was used to determine the key drivers of overall satisfaction. The results indicate that there are three factors or attributes that drive overall satisfaction with the cooperative, as shown in the above figure: Member Service; Electric Service; and Cost.
- The scores are to be interpreted relative to each other. For example, since *Member Service* has a score of 0.53 and *Cost* has a score of 0.34, we can say that member service is 1.5 times as important to overall satisfaction as members' perceptions of the rates they pay. Attributes and factors not shown above are not significant drivers of overall satisfaction.
- More information on how the factors were formed and importance scores derived can be found in the appendix.



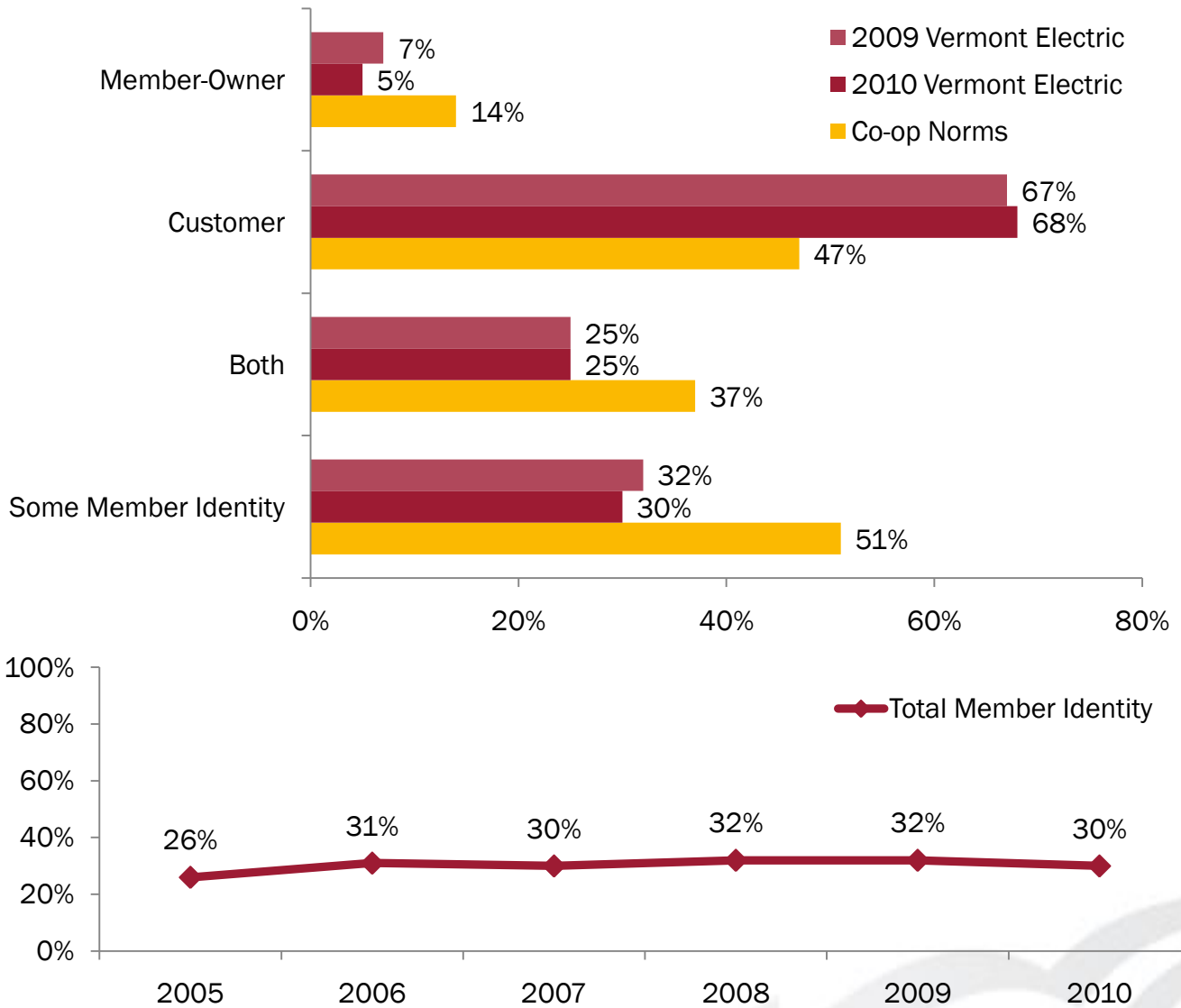
# Key Drivers of Value



- Regression analysis was also used to determine the key drivers of value for the money. The results indicate that there are five factors that drive perceived value, as shown in the above figure.
- The scores are to be interpreted relative to each other. For example, since *Cost* has a score of 0.52 and *Electric Service* has a score of 0.28, we can say that member perceptions of cost are about twice as important to the value they feel they receive for their money as their perceptions of the electric service provided.
- Attributes and factors not shown above are not significant drivers of value.

- Member Identity
- Cooperative  
Commitment

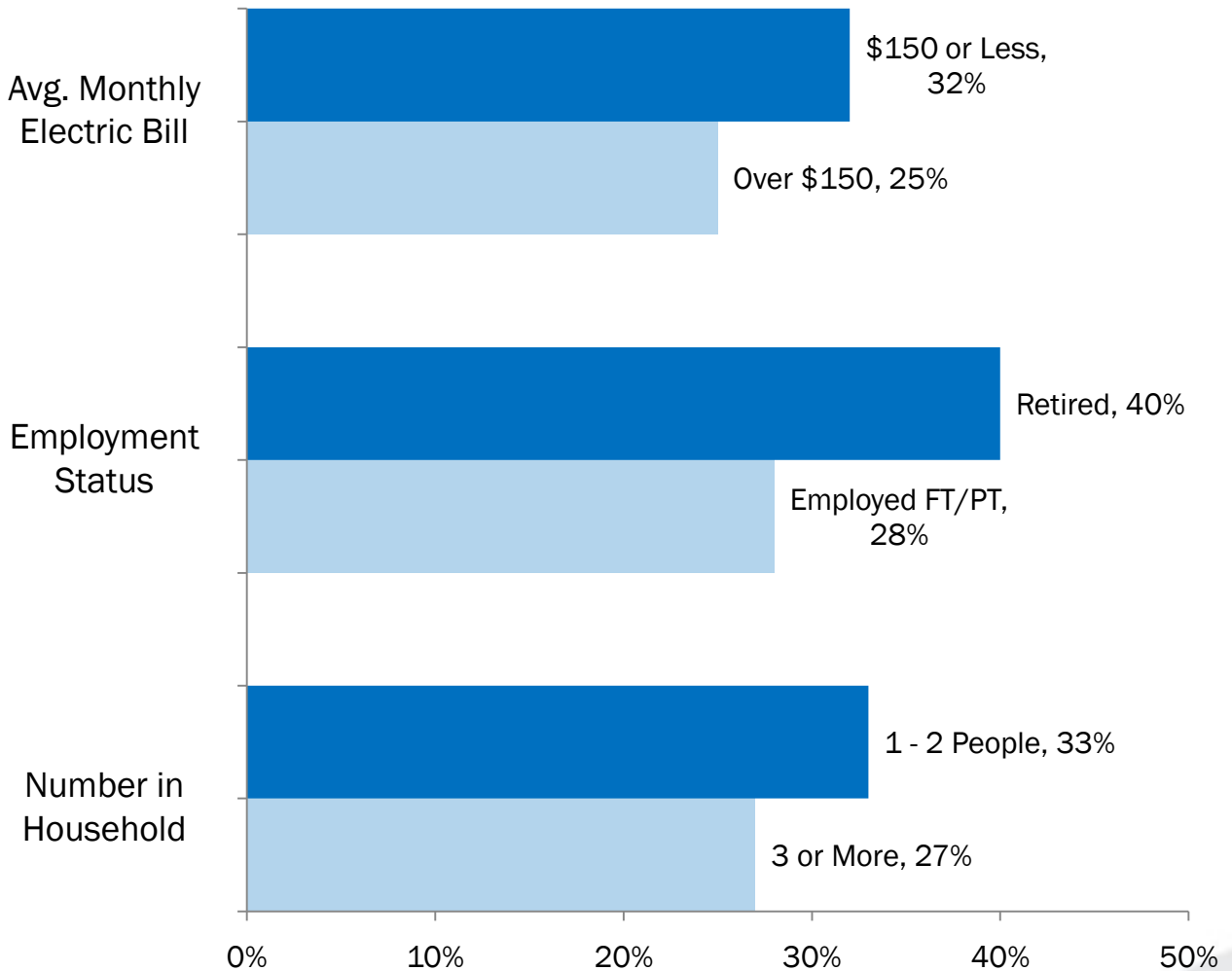
# View Self as Member-Owner or Customer of Vermont Electric Cooperative



Do you view yourself as a member-owner or as a customer of your electric cooperative, or both?

- Three in ten respondents identify themselves as either a member-owner of the co-op or as both a member-owner and a customer, as opposed to being a customer only.
- This is nearly identical to member identity in the previous studies.
- Overall member identity is lower than the Co-op Norms (51%).

# Member Identity by Member Segment

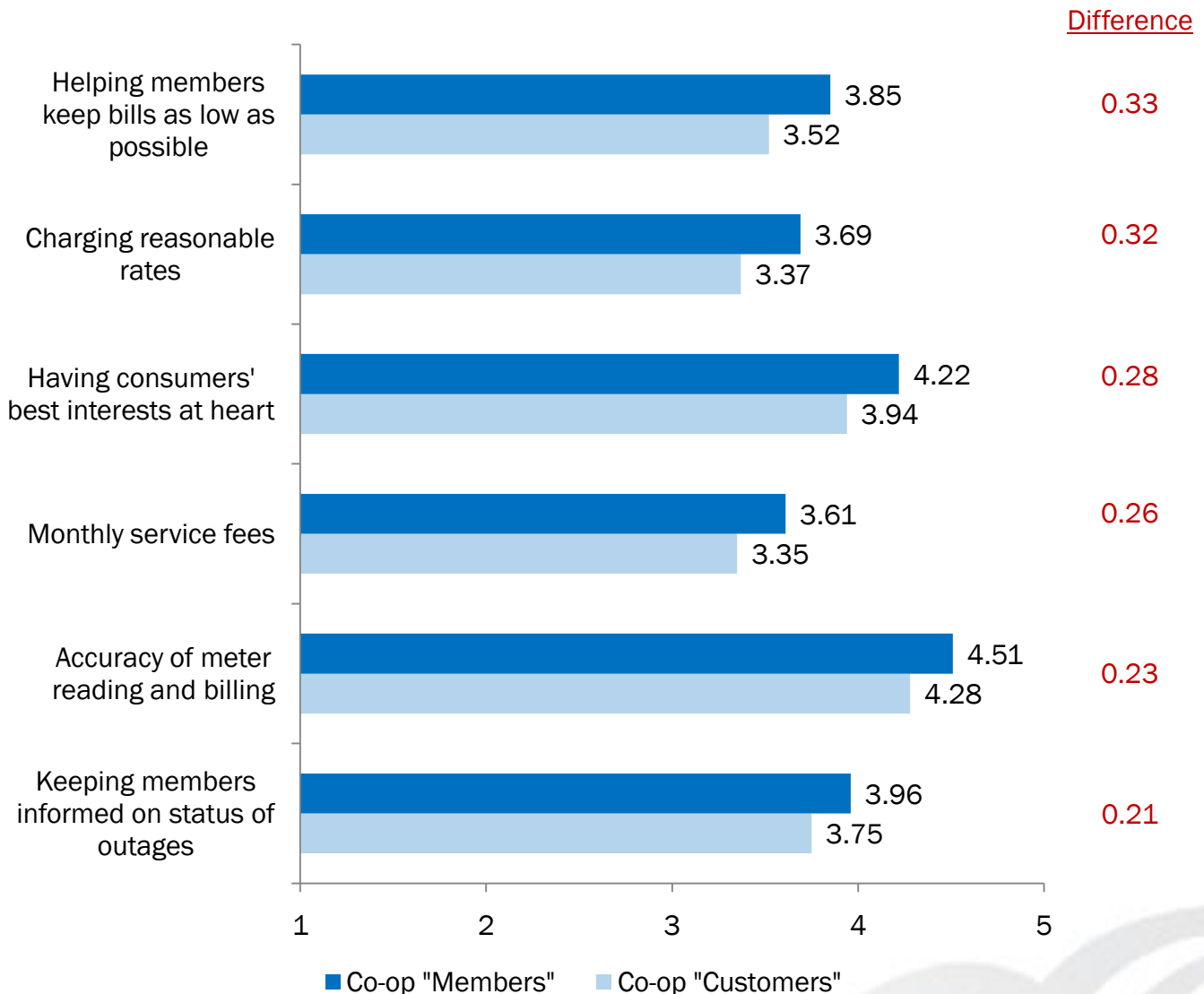


Do you view yourself as a member-owner or as a customer of your electric cooperative, or both?

- Member segments that differ the most in the percentage with member identity are graphed above.
- Retired members are significantly more likely to view themselves as “members” than are those working full or part-time.
- There are no differences in member identity based on District.

# Attribute Ratings By Member/Customer Identity

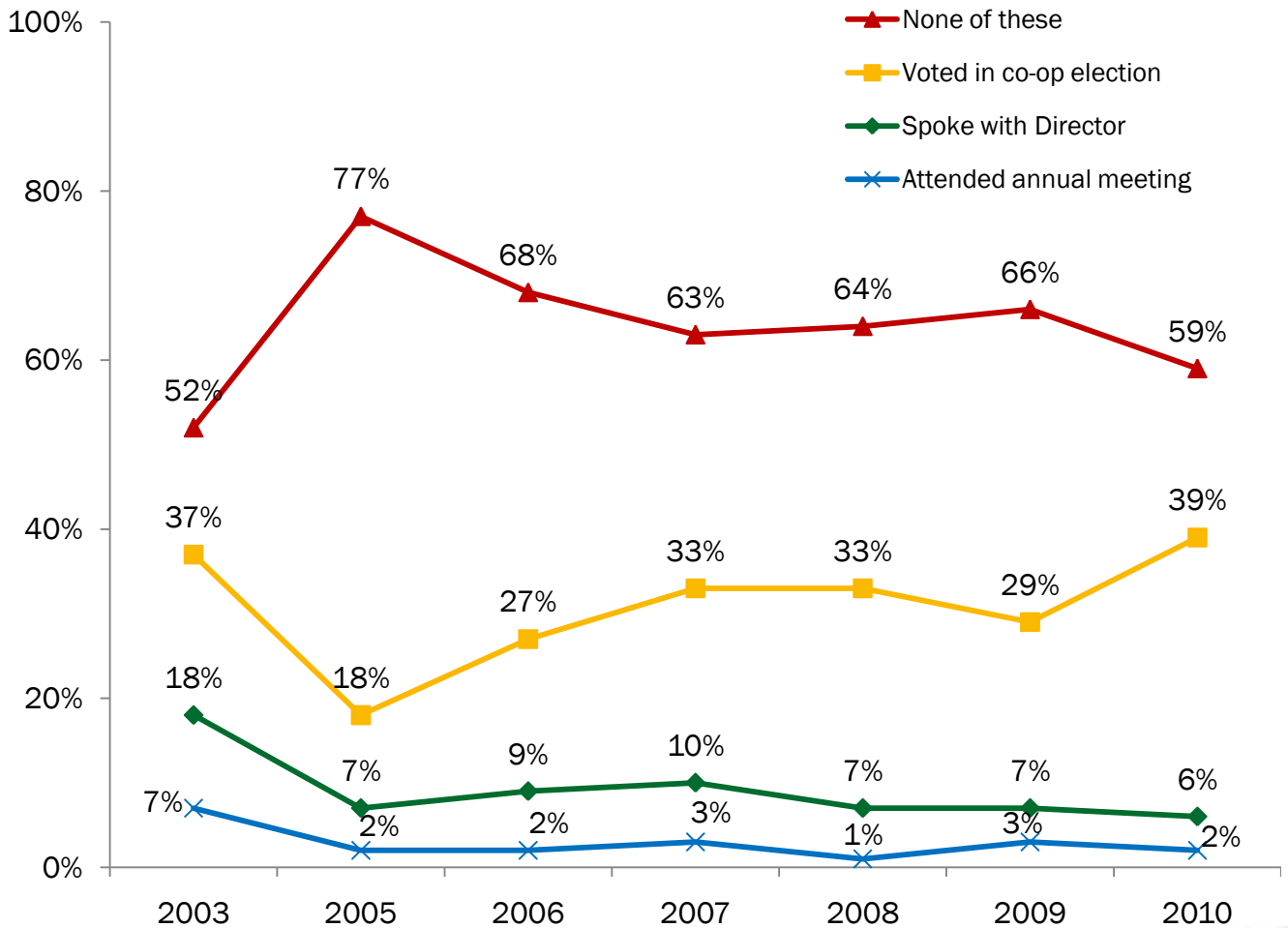
Top 8 Attribute Mean Differences Graphed



- Those with member identity give higher ratings on 21 of the 22 co-op performance attributes tested in this study with four of the differences being statistically significant.
- The attributes with the greatest differences between the “member” and “customer” mean ratings are graphed above, with the largest gaps for *helping members keep bills as low as possible* and *charging reasonable rates*.
- Additionally, “members” give significantly higher ratings than “customers” for their overall satisfaction with VEC.

# Participation in Co-op Activities in Past Three Years

Multiple Responses Possible

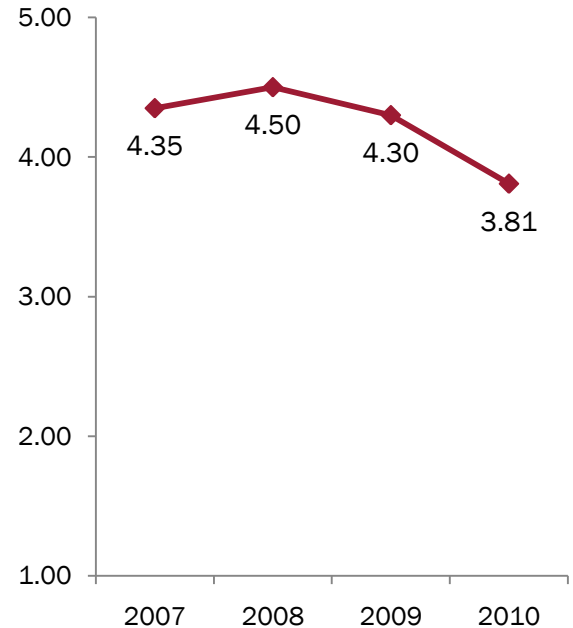
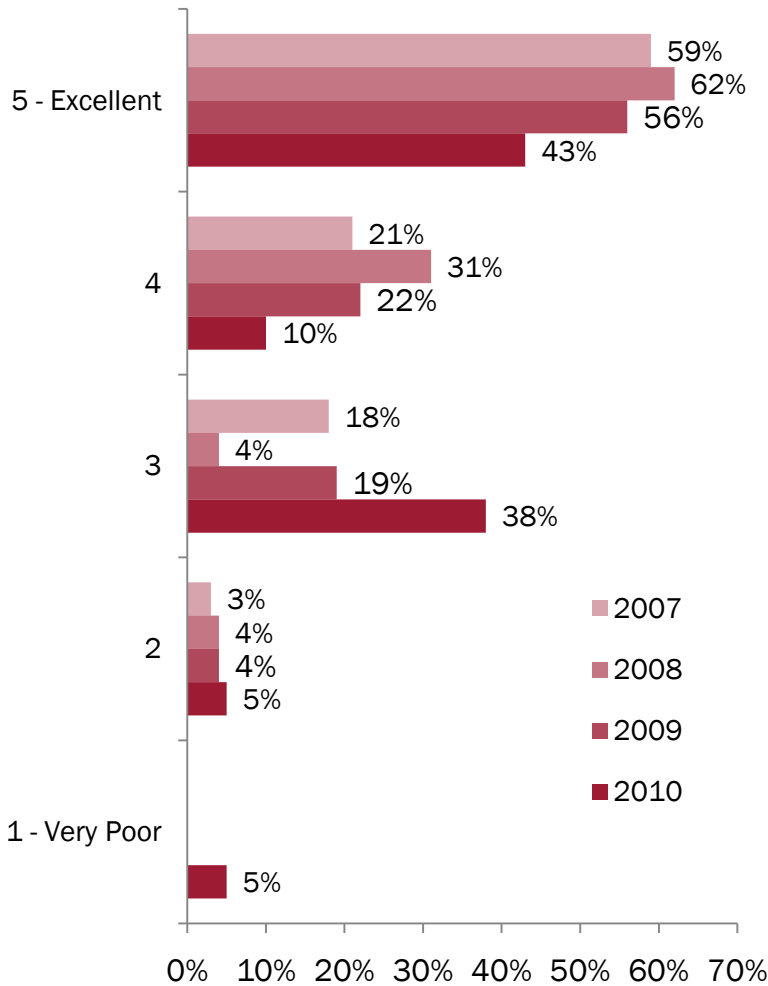


Concerning Vermont Electric Cooperative, have you done any of the following in the past three years?

- Approximately four in ten members report having participated in co-op activities in the past 12 months by voting on something related to the co-op (39%), speaking with a Board Director or Trustee (6%) and/or attending a co-op meeting (2%).
- Although not all the differences are statistically significant, those with member identity, retired members, and males are more likely than their individual counterparts to participate in co-op activities.
- Members in District 19 are the most likely to have participated in at least one of these activities in the past year, especially voting in a co-op election. Conversely, those in Districts 12 and 17 are the least likely to have participated in these co-op activities.

# Evaluation of Relationship With Director

Asked of those who have spoken with a board director in the past three years



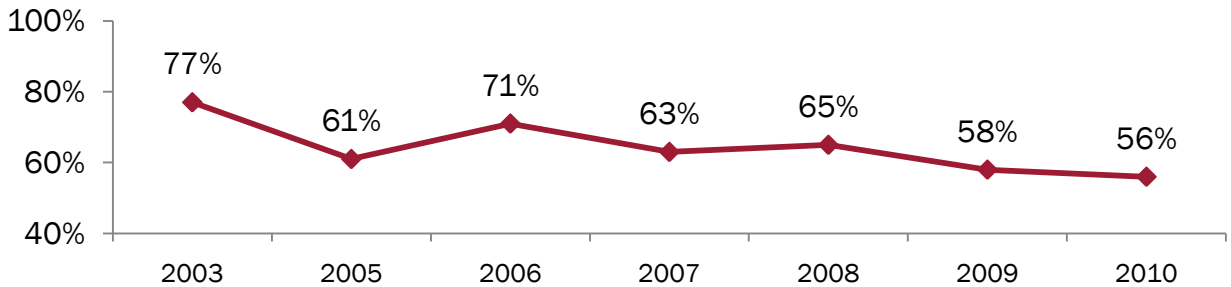
If spoke with a board director or trustee in the past three years, using a 5-point scale on which "1" means very poor and "5" means excellent, how would you rate your relationship with your Director?

- Of the 21 surveyed members who have interacted with a Board Director/Trustee, more than half evaluate their relationship as good (10%) or excellent (43%).
- The mean rating is lower than in 2009, although the sample size is too small to test for statistical significance.

# ■ Contact With the Co-op

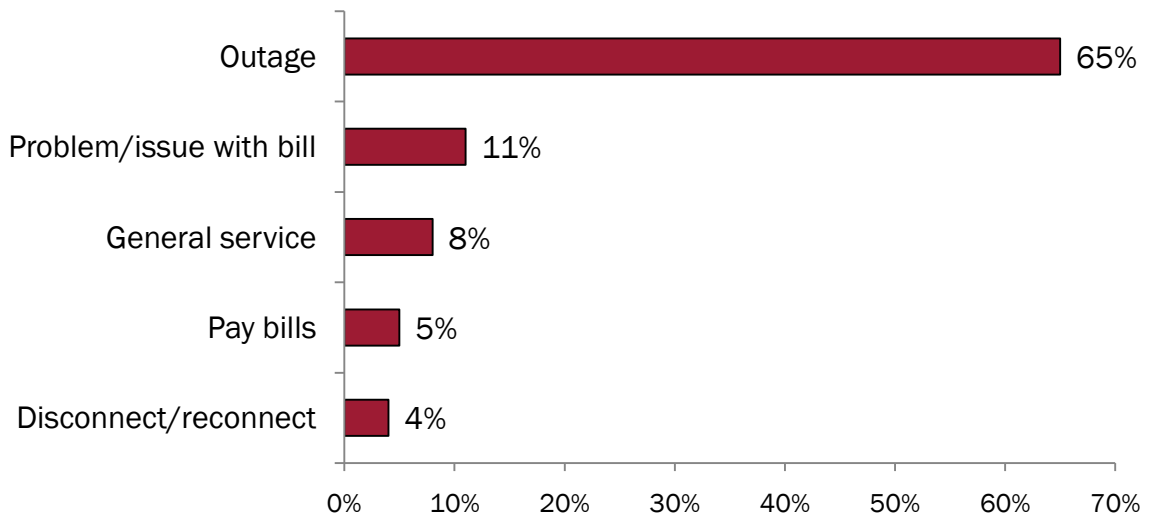


# Had Contact With VEC in the Past Year



## Reason(s) For Contact

Multiple Responses Possible

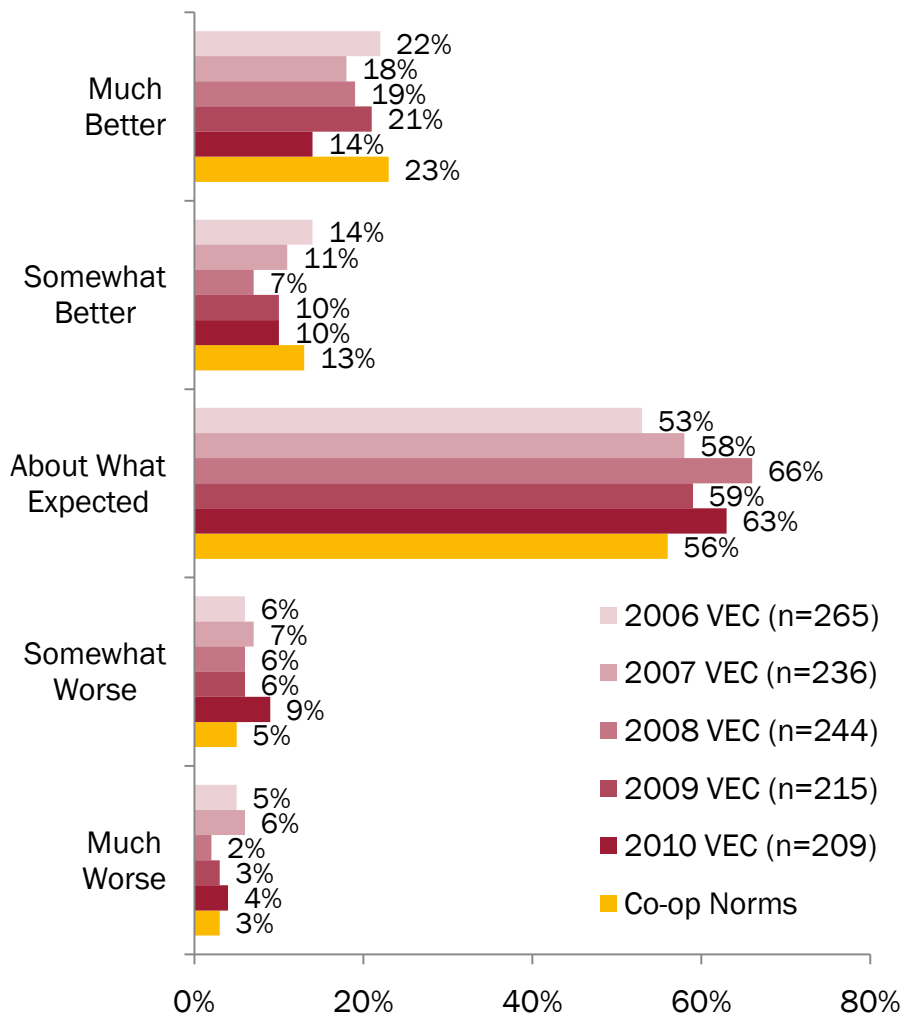


In the past year, did you contact Vermont Electric Cooperative for any reason? If yes, what were the reasons for any calls or visits you made?

- Fifty-six percent indicate they have contacted Vermont Electric over the past year. This is consistent with the 2009 study, but significantly less contact than in 2008.
- Member segments significantly more likely than their counterparts to report having contacted the co-op include those less satisfied with the co-op overall, those paying higher monthly electric bills, those living in larger households, those employed full- or part-time, and those living in District 12.
- Respondents are most likely to have contacted the co-op because of a power outage (65%).

# Evaluation of Contact With Cooperative

Asked of those who have contacted the co-op in the past year



Contact Evaluation	Overall Satisfaction
No Contact	8.58
Much Better	8.73
Somewhat Better	8.05
As Expected	8.03
Worse Than Expected	5.44
Contact Reason	Contact Evaluation
Bill issue/problem	3.70
Disconnect/reconnect	3.67
Pay bill	3.55
General service	3.44
Outage	3.04

Based on your contact with Vermont Electric, was your experience much better, somewhat better, about what you expected, somewhat worse, or much worse than you expected?

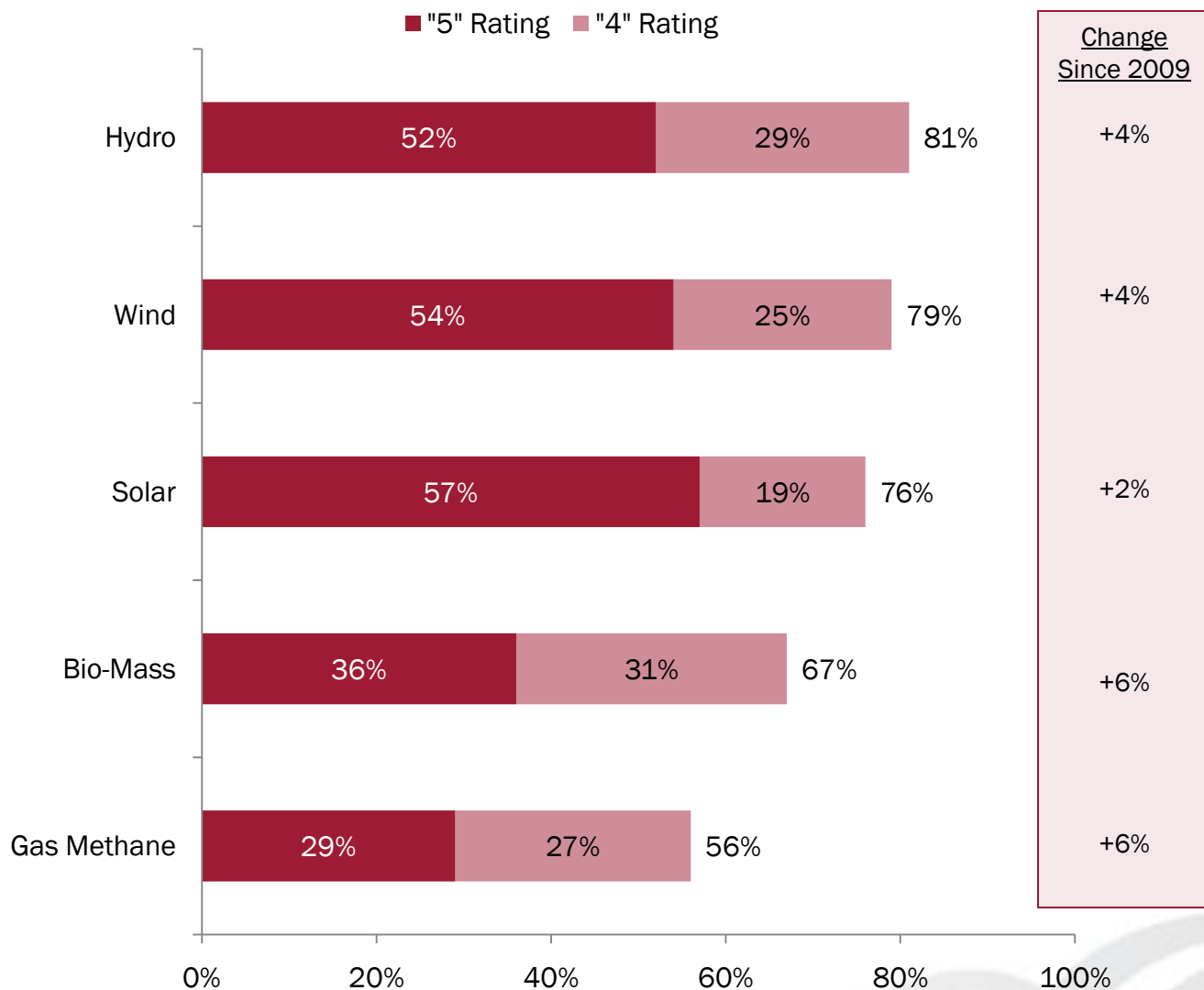
- Most of those who contacted Vermont Electric in the past year say their expectations were met or exceeded. One-quarter indicate their contact was somewhat (10%) or much (14%) better than expected. This is lower than both the 2009 study and the Co-op Norms.
- Those who did not contact Vermont Electric in the past year are significantly more satisfied overall than those who did contact the co-op. It is interesting to note that when the contact is much better than expected, overall satisfaction is higher than those who did not contact the co-op at all. Not surprisingly, the few who evaluate their contact as worse than expected are least satisfied.
- Those making contact regarding an outage evaluate their contact least positively.

- Renewable Energy
- Alternative Energy Sources

# Importance of Using Renewable Energy Sources

1-5 Scale: 1 = Not At All Important; 5 = Extremely Important

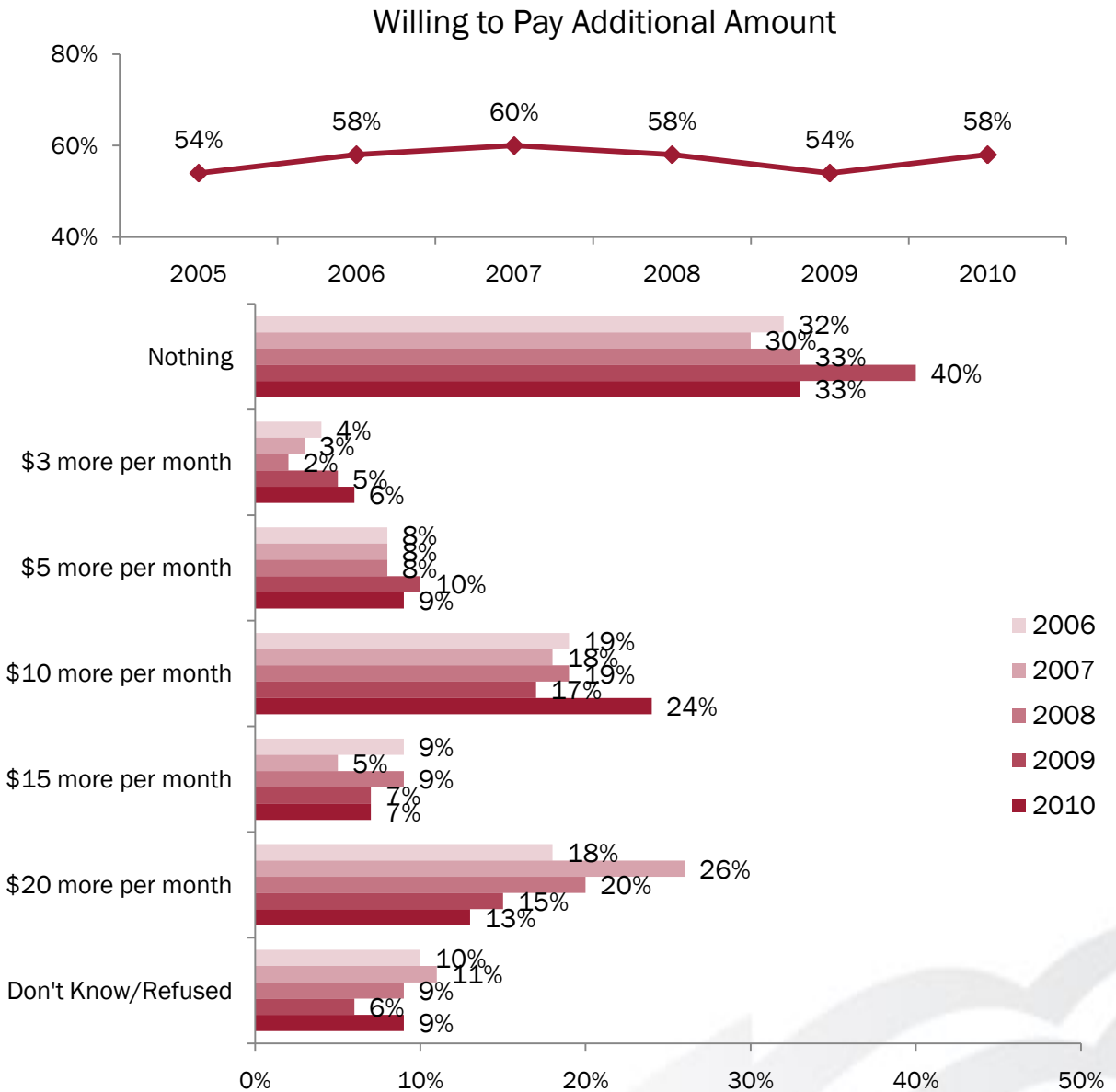
Top 2 Box – “4” and “5” Graphed



On a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 is “not at all important” and 5 means “extremely important,” how important is it to you for Vermont Electric to provide environmentally friendly “green power” from the following renewable energy sources?

- More than three-quarters place high importance on VEC using hydro, wind, or solar to provide environmentally friendly green power.
- The importance of each renewable energy source has increased slightly since 2009.

# Amount Willing to Pay Extra to Receive Green Power

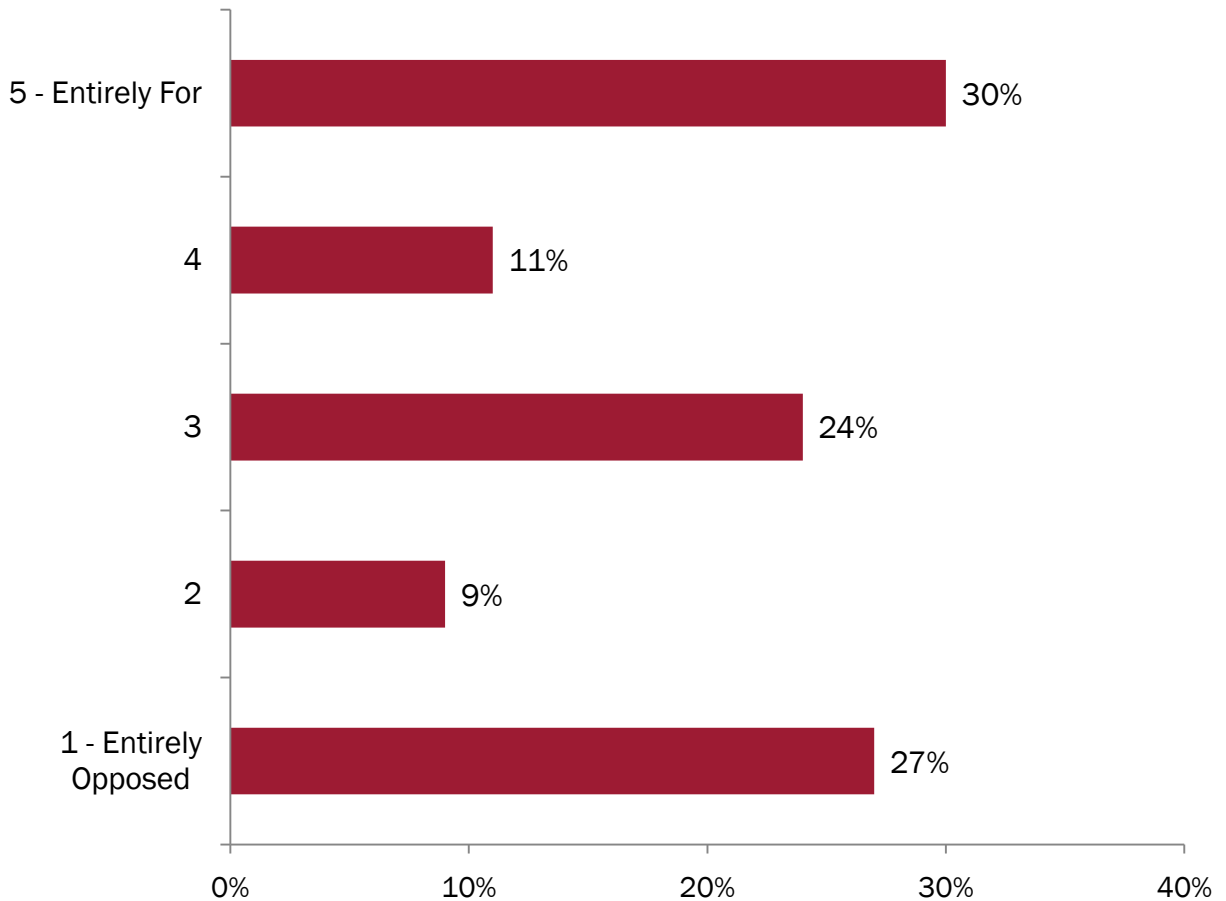


If electricity from renewable energy sources were not available at the same rates you are paying now, how much more would you be willing to pay, if anything, to get this green power?

- Approximately six in ten members are willing to pay an additional amount to receive green power, with most of this group willing to pay \$10 or more per month.
- Member segments willing to pay an additional amount include newer members, those working full- or part-time, those living in larger households, and more affluent members.

# VEC Distributing Electricity Generated by Nuclear Power

Mean = 3.08

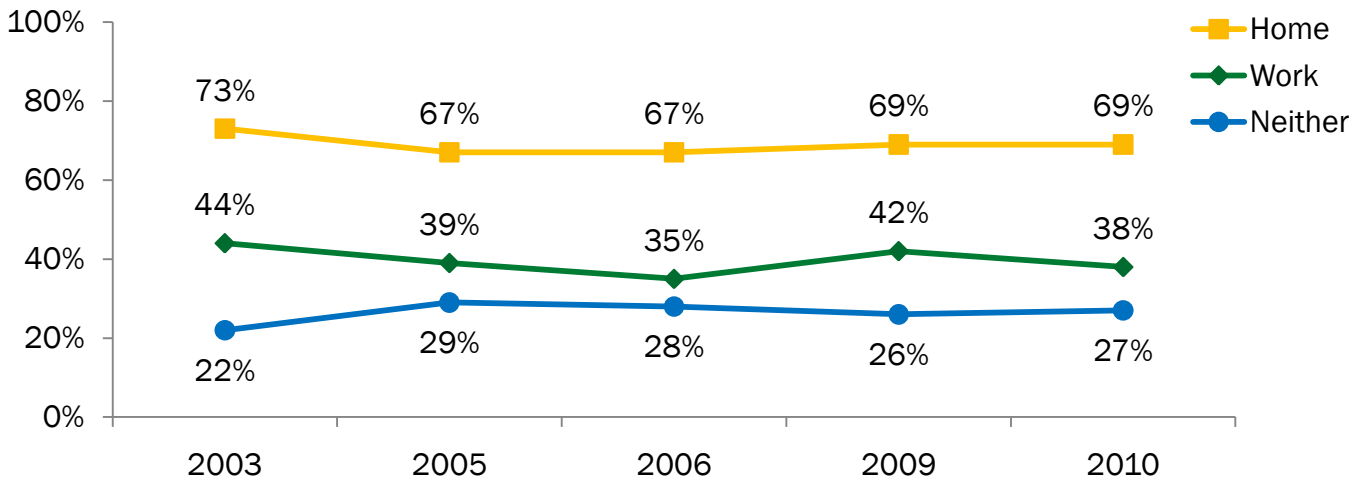


How do you feel about Vermont Electric distributing electricity generated in part by nuclear power? Please rate your opinion of this on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means you are “entirely against” nuclear power and 5 means you are “entirely for” it.

- Forty-one percent of the members are for VEC distributing electricity generated by nuclear power (rating of “4” or “5”), while 36% are opposed (rating of “1” or “2”).
- Longer-tenured members, retired members, males, and those living in District 16 are significantly more likely than their counterparts to be in favor of generation using nuclear power.

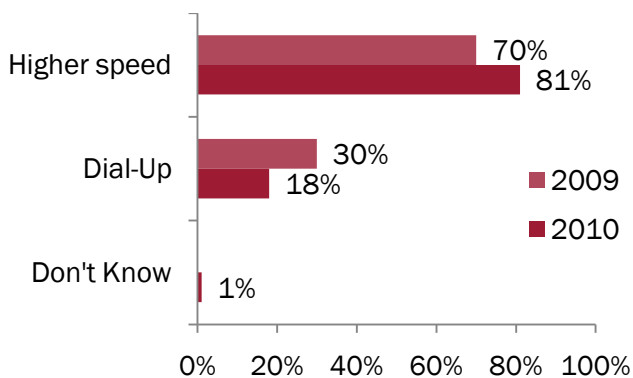
- Internet
- Communications

# Internet Access and Co-op Website



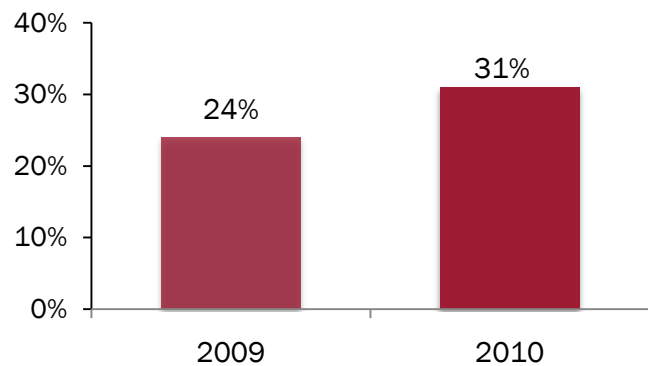
## Type of Home Access

Based on those with home Internet access



## Visited Website

Based on those with Internet access



Do you have Internet access either at home or at work? If yes, is your Internet access at home dial-up or a higher speed form of access such as cable, satellite, or DSL service? Have you ever visited Vermont Electric's website?

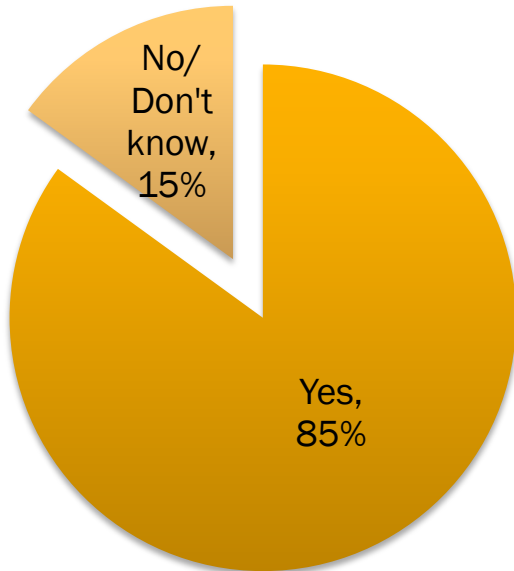
- Approximately three-quarters of VEC's members have Internet access at home (69%) and/or work (27%). Of those with home Internet access, the proportion having higher speed access has increased since 2009 (from 70% up to 81%).
- In addition, the percentage of members who have visited the co-op's website has increased since 2009 (from 24% up to 31%).
- Internet access among VEC members is slightly higher than among members in the Co-op Norms.
- Newer members, those paying higher monthly electric bills, those living in larger households, those who work full- or part-time, more affluent members, and those in District 12 are significantly more likely than their individual counterparts to have Internet access. Those with member identity, those living in larger households, and more affluent members are also significantly more likely to have visited VEC's website.



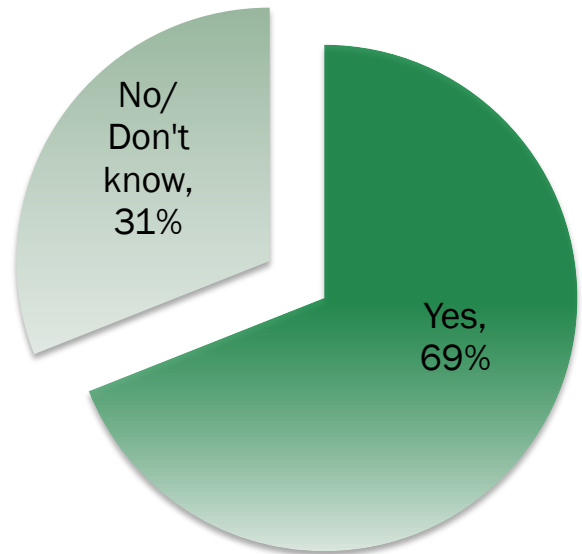
# eBill Awareness

Asked of those with Internet access

2009



2010

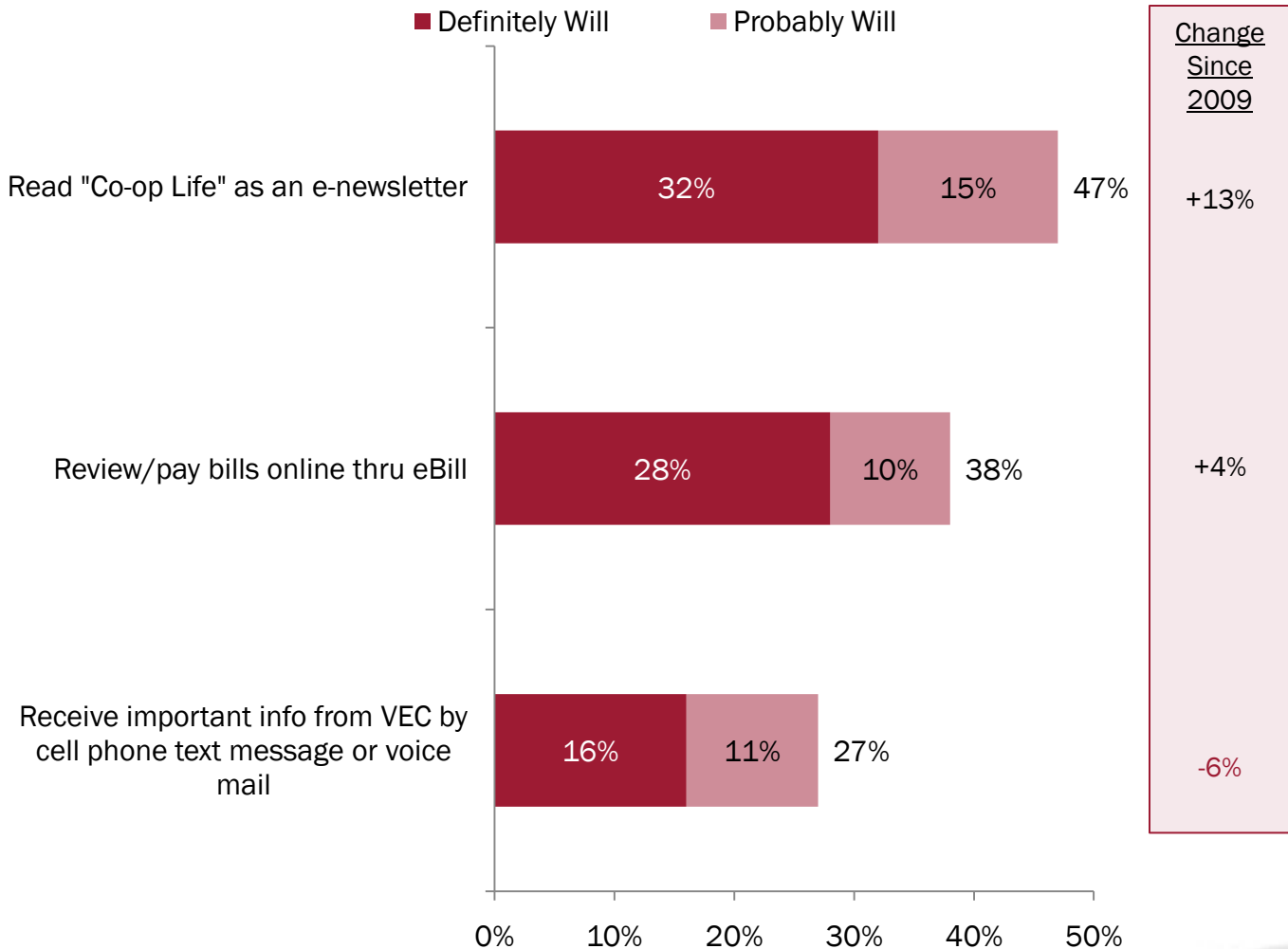


Are you aware that VEC offers an electronic billing and payment option called eBill that enables members to review and pay their monthly electric bill online?

- While most of the members with Internet access are aware that VEC offers eBill, member awareness is significantly lower than in 2009 (85% down to 69%).
- Awareness is significantly higher among those with larger monthly electric bills.
- By area, those in District 16 are the most likely to be aware that VEC offers eBill while those in District 19 are the least likely.

# Likelihood of Participating in Online Services

Asked of those with Internet access  
 “Definitely” and “Probably” Will Graphed



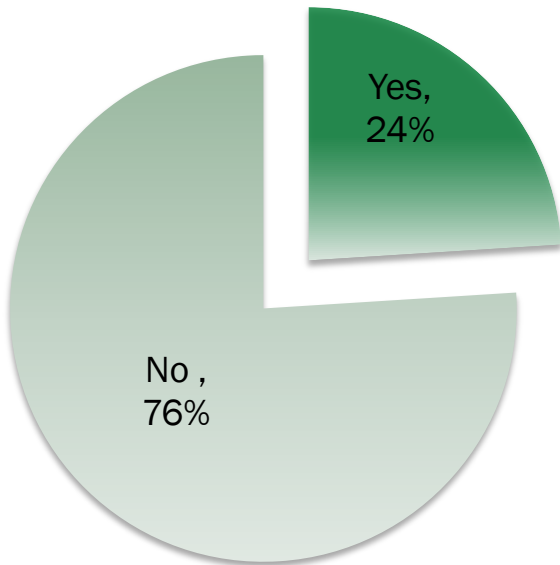
In the future, would you say you would definitely or probably, might or might not, or you probably or definitely would not use the following services from VEC?

- Member interest in reading *Co-op Life* as an e-newsletter has increased significantly since 2009. In contrast, fewer residential members express interest in receiving important information from VEC by cell phone text message or voice mail.
- Newer members, more affluent members, those working full- or part-time, and those living in larger households are significantly more interested in reviewing and paying their electric bills online than are their counterparts.
- District 17 is the most interested in reading *Co-op Life* as an e-newsletter, significantly more than those in District 16.

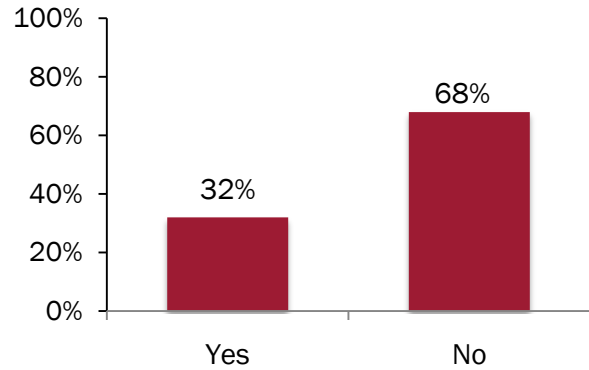
# Online Outage Center

Asked of those with Internet access

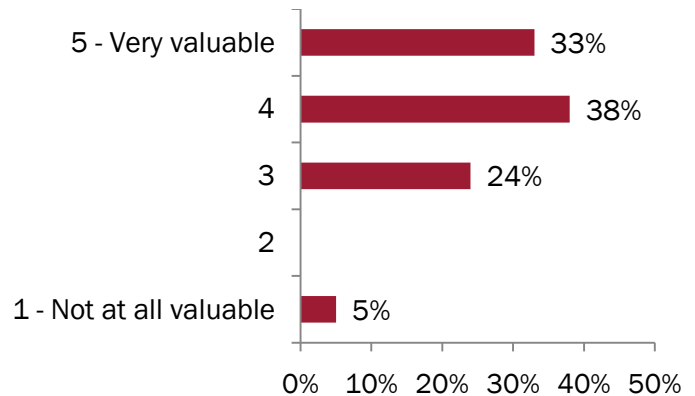
Aware of VEC's Online Outage Center



If Aware: Used Online Outage Center



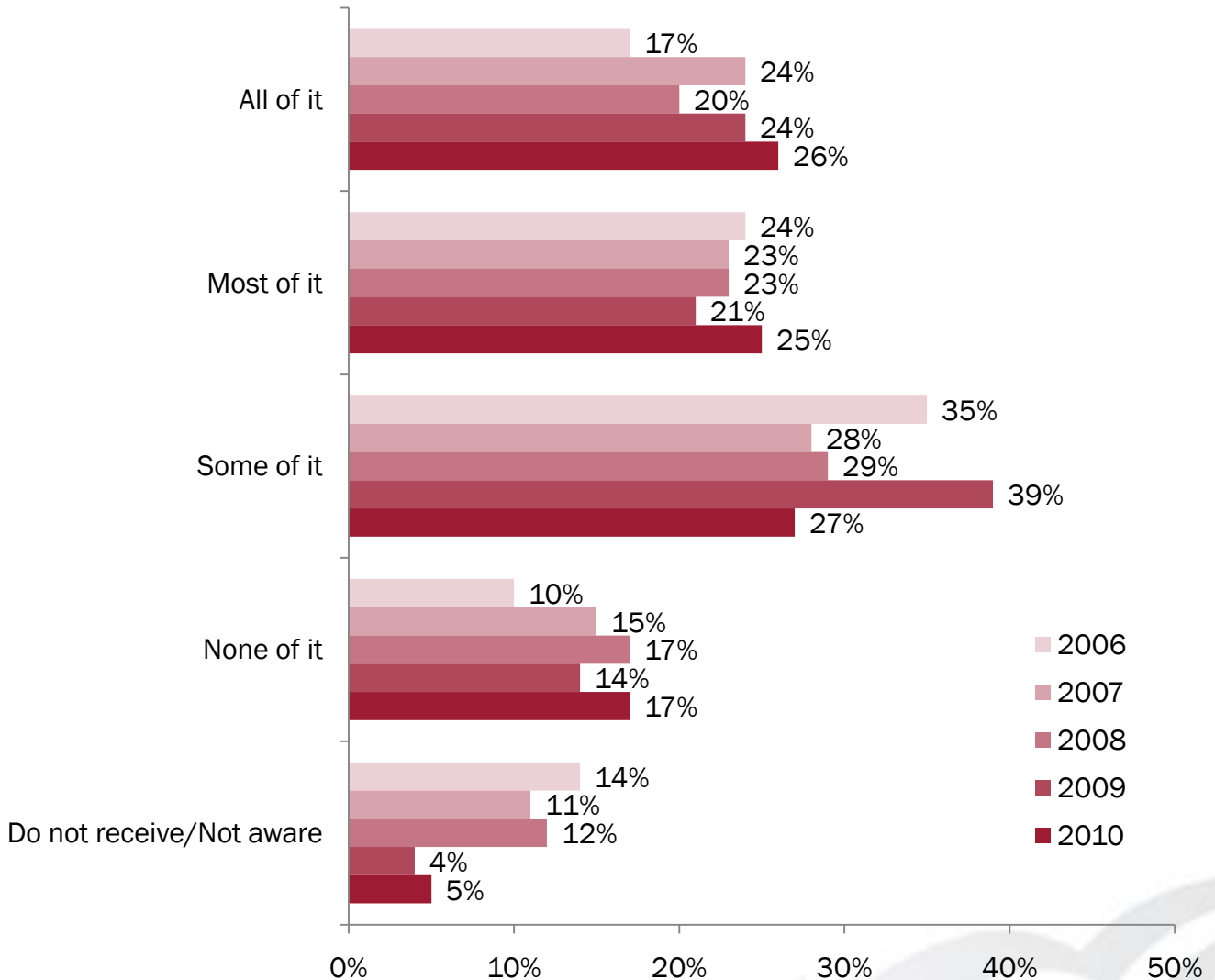
If Used: Value of Outage Center



Are you aware that VEC has an outage center online through a link on their website that provides up-to-date outage information as outages occur? If aware, have you used the outage center? If yes, using a 5-point scale where 1 means "not at all valuable" and 5 means "very valuable", how valuable did you find the outage center to be?

- Approximately one-quarter of VEC's residential members that have Internet access are aware of the co-op's online outage center, with one-third of this group having used it. Almost all of those who have used it found it to have some value.
- Awareness of the co-op's online outage center is highest in District 12 and lowest in District 17.

# Co-op Life Newsletter Readership



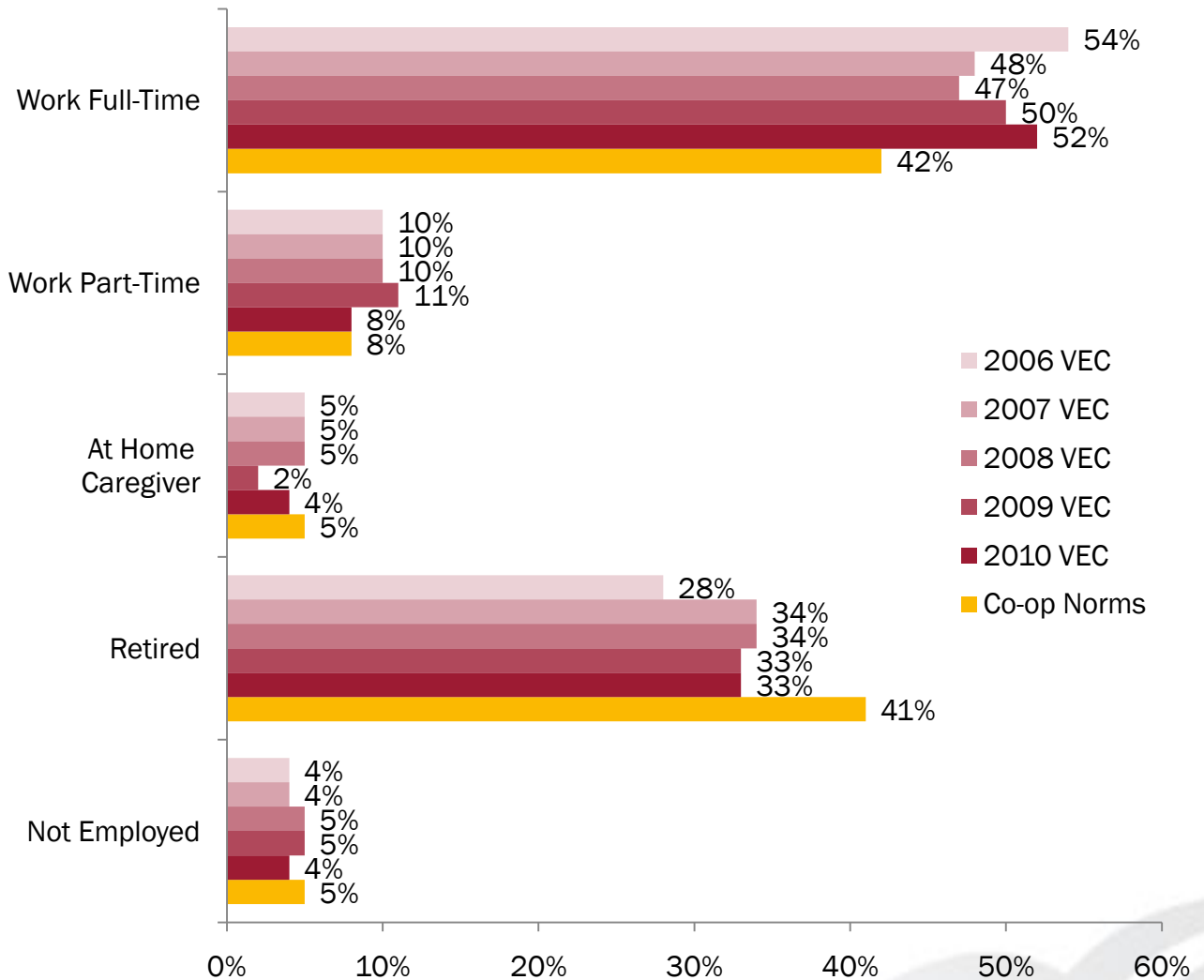
How much of the quarterly newsletter called “Co-op Life” do you usually read?

- More than half of the residential members report they read all (26%) or most (25%) of VEC’s quarterly newsletter *Co-op Life*.
- Those with member identity, longer-tenured members, and retired members are significantly more likely than their counterparts to indicate they read all of the co-op newsletter.



- Residential Member Characteristics

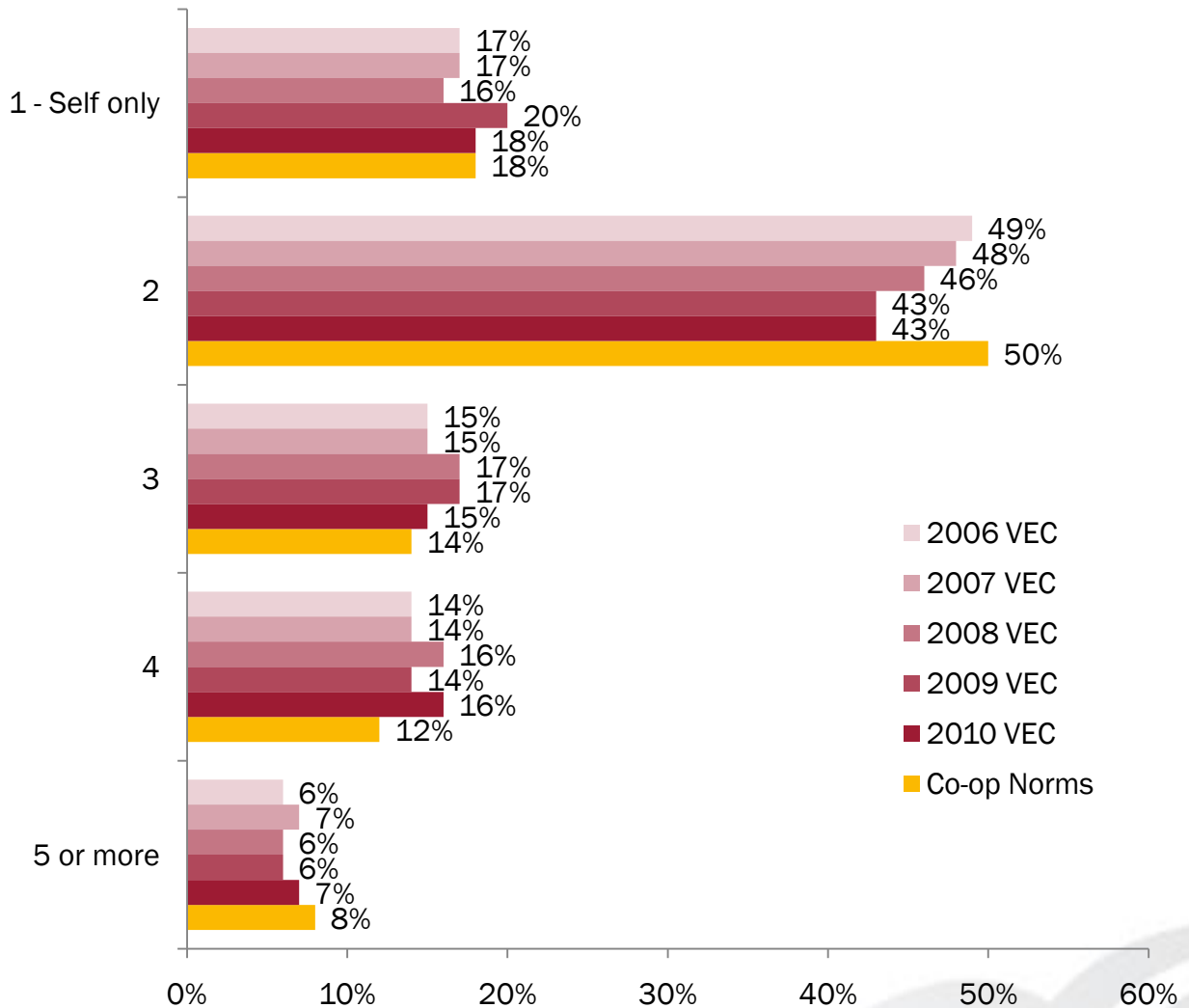
# Employment Status



What is your current employment status?

- More than half of the residential members work full-time and an additional 8% work part-time. Fully one-third are retired. This does not differ significantly from the 2009 study.
- Compared to the Co-op Norms, members are much less likely to be retired and more likely to work full-time.

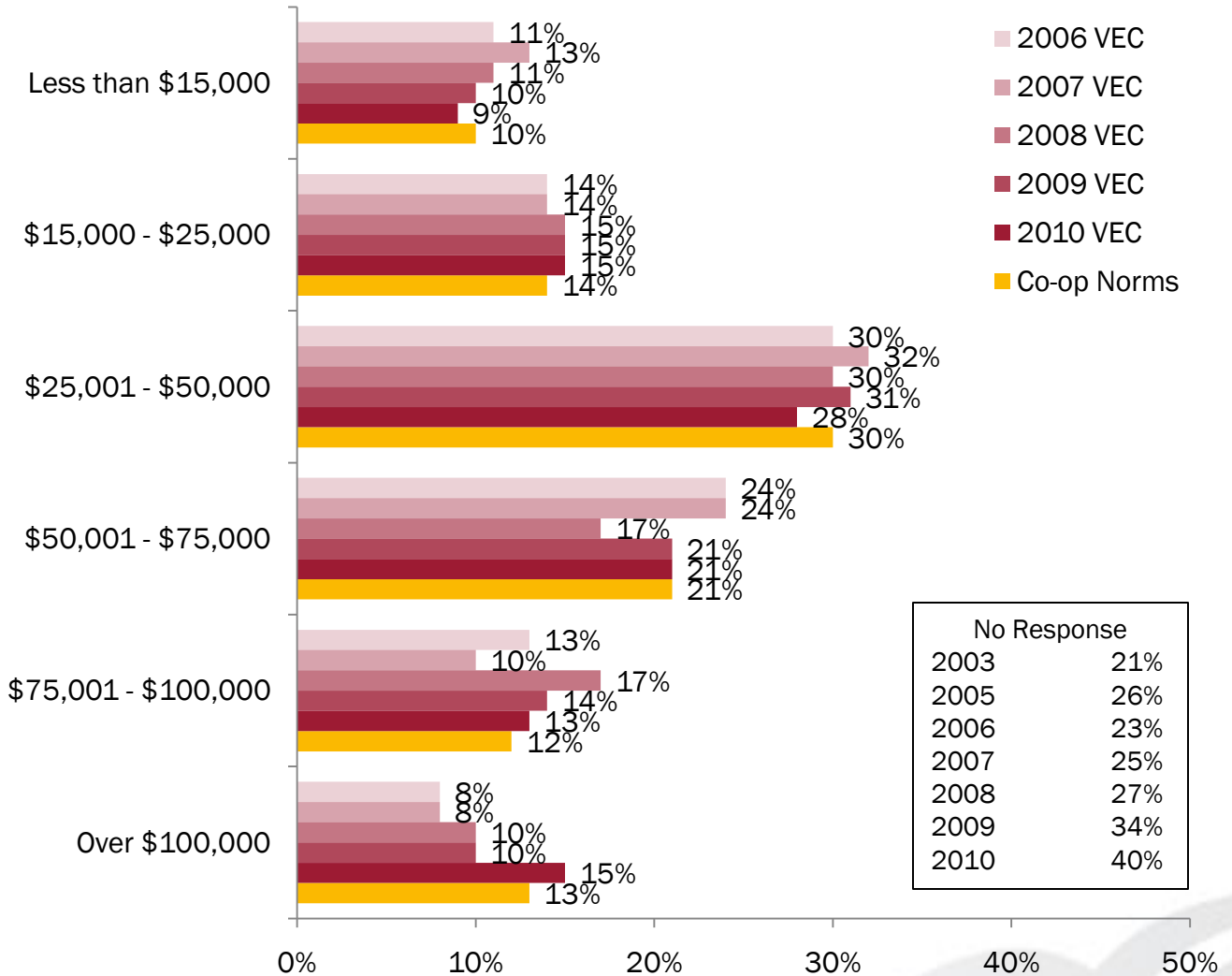
# Number in Household



How many people live in your household including yourself?

- More than four in ten members live with one other person while 18% live alone. Conversely, approximately one-quarter live in a household of four or more people.
- This does not differ significantly from previous studies and is generally consistent with the Co-op Norms.

# Annual Household Income

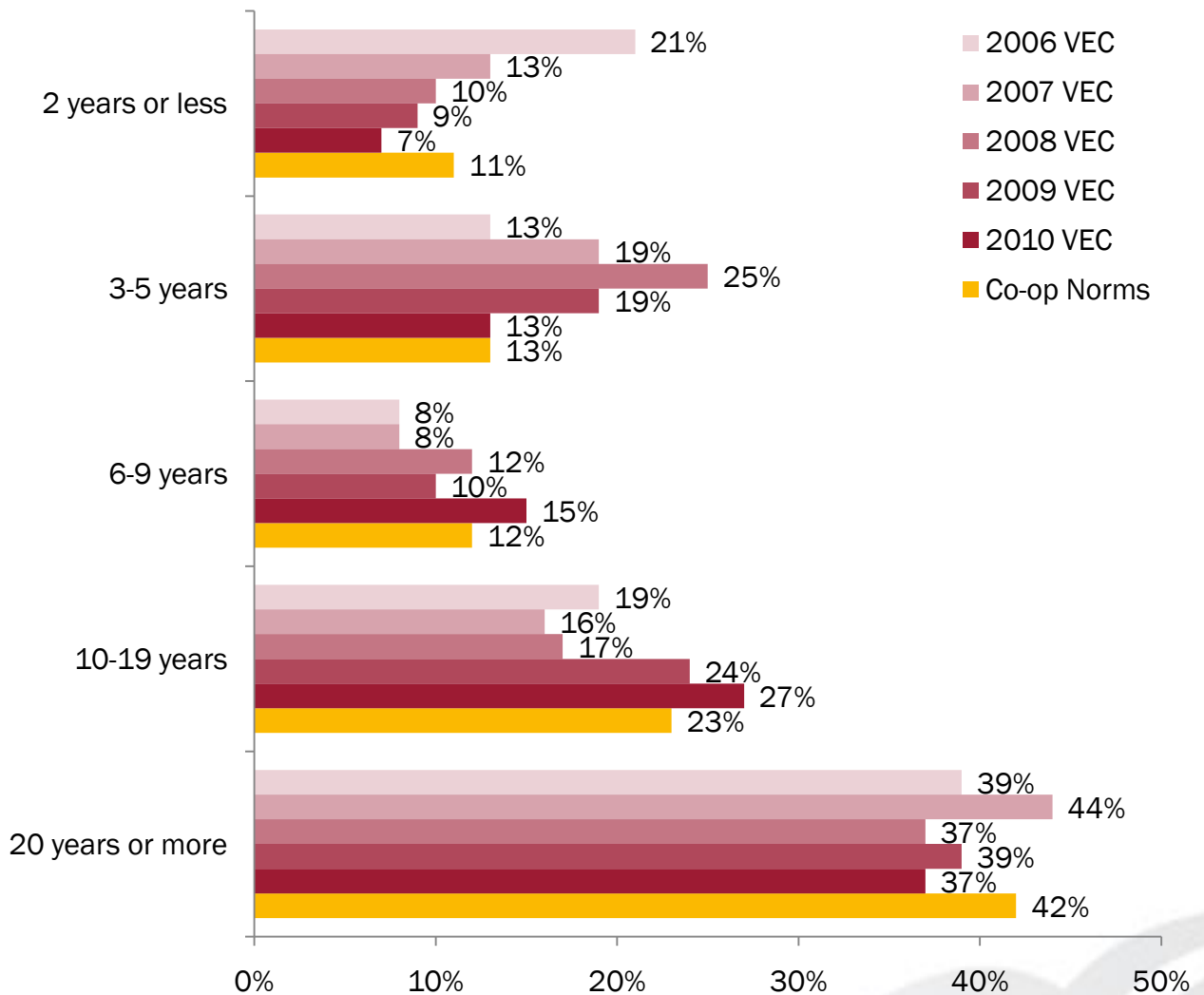


Into which of the following categories does your annual household income fall before taxes?

- Approximately one-quarter report an annual household income of \$25,000 or less while 28% report a household income over \$75,000. Fully four in ten chose not to answer.
- This is similar to the Co-op Norms and does not differ significantly from past studies.



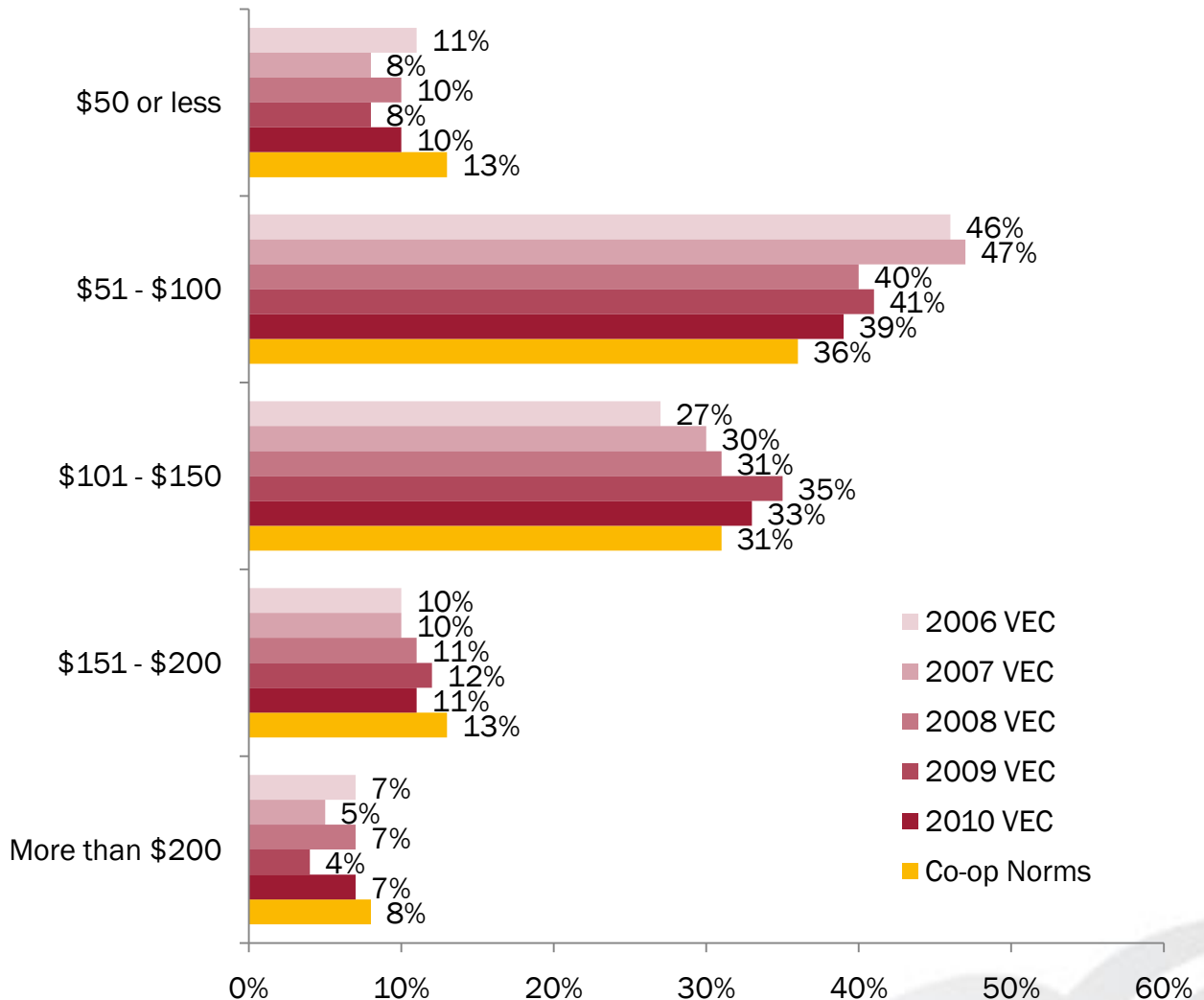
# Years Served By Vermont Electric Cooperative



How long have you received your electric service from Vermont Electric Cooperative?

- Thirty-seven percent have been served by Vermont Electric Cooperative for 20 years or more. Seven percent are newer members, served for two years or less.
- This is generally consistent with the Co-op Norms and the 2009 study.

# Average Monthly Electric Bill



What is your average monthly electric bill?

- Almost half of the respondents report an average monthly electric bill of \$100 or less and 33% pay between \$101 and \$150. Conversely, 17% pay more than \$150.
- Not surprisingly, this represents a significantly higher electric bill than in 2006 but does not differ significantly from the 2008 and 2009 studies and is similar to the Co-op Norms.

# Key Driver Explanation

## EXPLANATION OF FACTOR AND KEY DRIVER ANALYSES

### Factor Analysis

Factor analysis was used to reduce the many service attributes rated in the survey to a core set of issues. This analysis shows how members unconsciously think about or group the many different performance attributes. Three factors were found and named Member Service, Electric Service, and Cost.

The performance quality attributes that make up each factor are listed below in order of the performance attribute most related to the factor down to the attribute least related to the factor.

#### Member Service Factor

- The courtesy, understanding, and helpfulness of employees to your inquiries or problems
- Having highly-trained, professional employees
- Resolving any issues or problems
- The overall customer service they provide
- The speed and efficiency of responding to customers
- Having consumers' best interests at heart

#### Electric Service Factor

- Keeping blinks and momentary outages to a minimum
- The reliability of service and frequency of interruptions
- Keeping the number of longer outages to a minimum
- Providing consistent voltage without surges or brownouts
- The restoration of power after an outage
- The speed and efficiency of responding to customers

#### Cost Factor

- Charging reasonable rates
- The monthly service fees
- Helping customers keep bills as low as possible
- Having consumers' best interests at heart

The following attributes are not included in the factors found because they are not highly correlated with other attributes:

- Communicating with members and keeping them informed
- Operating with concern for the environment
- Supporting the local community
- Keeping members informed on the status of outages
- Providing accurate and easy to understand bills
- The accuracy of meter reading and billing
- Having convenient payment options

### **Key Driver Analysis**

To help determine where expectations are and are not being met for co-op members, we calculate importance scores for the factors and attributes. The importance scores were derived using the beta scores from a regression of the factors and attributes on overall satisfaction. What we are looking for is significance. If a factor or attribute is positively significant, it has a positive relationship with satisfaction. If the factor/attribute receives a high rating, overall satisfaction/loyalty also receives a high rating. That is, the more a factor or attribute influences overall satisfaction, the higher its importance score. Factors and attributes that are found to be significant in the regression are labeled as key drivers of overall satisfaction and shown in the figure.

A separate analysis was done to find the key drivers of value among residential members of Vermont Electric Cooperative. Rather than regressing the factors and attributes on overall satisfaction, they were regressed on the attribute “delivering good value for the money”. The key drivers of value are shown in a separate figure.

# Verbatim Responses

## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

### Overall Satisfaction – Positive Responses

I am very satisfied with the service. (11 mentions)

The co-op is doing a good job. (7 mentions)

I'm very happy with the co-op. (4 mentions)

I am basically satisfied. (3 mentions)

I think they are doing a very good job at this point. (2 mentions)

I think they are doing the best they can. (2 mentions)

I think they do a great job. (3 mentions)

Everything is going quite well.

From what I've seen they were sluggish when they first took over, but in the past year they have become very good. I'm very satisfied with them.

Generally I have been pretty pleased. They have been real efficient and prompt.

I am getting good service from them. They are very good to help me, as I am legally blind.

I am happy with the service. They do the best they can under the conditions of which we have no control.

I am very pleased with the co-op. I would like lower rates.

I am very satisfied. They have reasonable rates.

I have been very pleased with them. I think they have been doing a fine job.

I have no problems at this time.

I hope they can stay in business and keep on doing what they're doing.

I like the co-op concept and am pleased with the co-op.

I think over the last few years that they have tried to do the best job they could do.

I think they are a pretty good company; I have no problems or issues with them.

I think they are doing the best they can with what they have to work with. They are doing a super job.

Other than the price, I don't have a problem. I think they do a good job, but the rates are high.

Overall I am very satisfied. I am opposed to wind power.

## **Additional Comments**

### **Overall Satisfaction – Positive Responses**

(continued)

I want to be positive and tell you in general we're very satisfied with them. We did have the problem with the payment error on their part. Now they promote they are a co-op with the "down home family feel" but when you don't pay, its big business and you're only a number. We always (and our record shows) pay on time. Yet, it was a very distasteful experience. They did correct the error, apologize, and give us a \$5 credit. I want to pay online and have the payment recorded electronically.

The co-op is okay but the rate is high.

The co-op is very good and reasonable.

The co-op's service is outstanding.

The service is fine.

The service is good. Lower the prices. Other than that, I am happy with them.

They are pretty good, and good about having to make arrangements when it comes to the bill. They are very nice that way.

They do a lovely job.

They have always done right by me. And anytime we have had a storm, they were right on the ball.

They have been good to us.

They seem to be trying to do a good job.

They seem to do a fair job.

We are very satisfied. However, the power outages are seldom fixed quickly.

When we built the house the co-op was very helpful in getting the material we needed.

You are 100 times better than GMC. I want to set up all my payments online. I wonder if I can switch to Waterbury.

### **Overall Satisfaction – Negative Responses**

I need a new company.

It is a terrible company. They shouldn't exist. Let us go! We have other companies we would like to join.

It's kind of a funky organization. It's cold, no warmth there.

You people suck.



**Additional Comments  
(continued)**

**Management/Board – Positive Responses**

I find them very reliable.

**Management/Board – Neutral Responses**

Do everything you can to lower the rates. Don't pay board members. They should volunteer.

**Operations/Engineering – Positive Responses**

I am impressed with the reliability of co-op.

I think they do as much as they can when we have an outage and they do it as quickly as possible.

I think they've done pretty well. For living in a rural area, they are very reliable.

I'm very happy that they are clearing the lines and this should cut down on outages, and this pleases me very much. I don't mind them spending money on this at all.

I'm happy just as long as they keep the power on, like they have for the last two years.

There are very few outages. Our trees are trimmed and taken care of, that is why.

They are a very reliable co-op.

They have always done right by me. And anytime we have had a storm, they were right on the ball.

We have never had any difficulties with them and they are good at responding back. I think they have come a long way, when it comes to outages. And they keep better repair of their lines and are quick to restore service.

**Operations/Engineering – Negative Responses**

Do not have so many power surges. I believe it is destroying motors on furnaces and many other things. It has ruined the computer system at the school. And we way have too many outages and surges. It is quite regular. I only reset my clocks three times a day because the power goes off more than that, and it is very frustrating.

Don't shut the power off in the morning when we're getting ready for work. I would like more information on community education and when the meetings are.

**Additional Comments**  
**Operations/Engineering – Negative Responses**  
**(continued)**

Get those surges under control. We lose appliances due to surges. I like that they are teaming up with wind power on Lowell Mountain.

I am concerned about the non-reading of meters and how accurate it is. I question their chart on past readings.

I am concerned about the number of outages we have. It seems like we have frequent outages, enough so we have to reset the clocks.

I would like to know why my usage is high but I don't want to pay for an audit. We have a lot of power surges and brown outs.

I'm new to the area. I'm seeing that the power goes out a lot. I call in and they do have an automated answer. I'd like to find out why the power goes out so much.

It seems like every time the wind blows or it rains we have the problems with power outages. I think that the lines aren't cleared of overgrowth.

It would be great if they would have fewer interruptions.

I've been with them a brief time, but during that time we went through a major outage. It was a frustrating experience.

Lower the number of outages; we have an extreme amount of those.

So far, I can't complain. I will say that I don't like my night light. They recently replaced the bulb for me and it's not any good for me. Before the light would shine on my porch and into my kitchen, but this bulb doesn't do it. I'm not pleased with the light.

Stop all these surges.

The last time we were without power, it was about a week. There was about three of us in this area, and three days later we were still without power. They did the others first that were just barely out of power. When they did finally turn us back on, all they did was come out and flip a switch.

The link that we are on is one of the most poorly serviced, and it is my understanding that they have a higher rate of outages than the norm, which I believe is below state average. So overall I am disappointed with the level of service.

They should be checking the lines here, because they haven't checked them for over 30 years. Brush is growing right up through them.

They should do a better job maintaining the line where I live.

We are very satisfied. However, the power outages are seldom fixed quickly.

**Additional Comments**  
**Operations/Engineering – Negative Responses**  
**(continued)**

We are wondering why the electric company doesn't go along and trim the branches away from the lines. Otherwise we have been pleased, but concerned about outages, since my husband is on oxygen, especially.

We have more outages than other utilities four miles away.

We have too many outages.

We lose electricity 15 times a year and we have the highest rates. I would ask for more dependability. Also, how can you access the website for outage information when you don't have any power?

**Operations/Engineering – Neutral Responses**

A text message would be best. Also, trim the trees.

I don't have many problems, just occasionally with outages.

I need to contact someone about coming and trimming the trees. They are starting to hit the lines from the garage over to the telephone pole.

Keeping the power on would be the best.

We are going to be working with them soon as my son is getting some land. We have to talk with them and the engineer to see where the power is coming in. He wants to build a house there.

**Member Services/Marketing/Communications – Positive Responses**

I just like it when they know when someone is disabled or special needs, that they call back and check on us. They have done this a couple times for me, and I like that.

If I call in with a question, they are very good to give me the answer I need.

I'm very pleased with the number that you call and they let you know how things are going with outages.

I've had some dealings with the employees. One employee, Gary Young, was very helpful to me.

We have never had any difficulties with them and they are good at responding back. I think they have come a long way when it comes to outages. And they keep better repair of their lines and are quick to restore service.

**Additional Comments  
(continued)**

**Member Services/Marketing/Communications – Negative Responses**

Have live people answer the phones.

I am frustrated with them. I would like to comment that I requested help with my meter problem. They told me I was on my own. I was actually denied help. I'm in a small 2 bedroom apartment. My dad is next door. My bill is higher than his and he has a hot tub, pool, and 5 bedrooms. I would like to talk to someone again and get more help. My bill is \$200-\$250 a month.

I do not like the automated answering service when there is a power outage. We are dairy farmers.

I don't like them at all. They have high rates and poor customer service.

I have my bill prepaid out of my check. It says it's due on the 30th, yet it's taken out on the 15th. I'd rather my payment be taken on the date it is due. I want my money to stay in the bank as long as possible. I also don't like an "automated answer" when I call in. Every time I call in, I get some kind of automated thing. I don't ever get to talk to an employee.

I'm concerned if they close the nuclear plant where are we going to get the power? I would rather see nuclear power, wind, and solar, and make it affordable to the average customer. What you don't use could be returned to the grid and distributed elsewhere. When I called in about a power outage, they couldn't give me much information, that's why I rated them a "2".

It is too bad that they don't have more on call resources when there are problems. In other words, more on-call personnel to answer calls because the towns are so distant. They have very remote areas.

The online outage information isn't always accurate.

**Member Services/Marketing/Communications – Neutral Responses**

If they have planned outage they should let people know.

It would be nice if they would get out and talk to people here in the rural areas because we can't get to the meetings. I know they say "go online" but a lot of people don't have computers. That doesn't work. I'd like face-to-face contact with them. It's hard for people to travel.

When my house is without power, please text me and tell me that you realize we are without power, and how soon we can expect the power to be restored.

**Billing/Finance – Positive Responses**

I do like the estimated bill. I do want it to be an estimated bill.

The billing graph is nice; I like the comparison.

**Additional Comments**  
**Billing/Finance – Positive Responses**  
**(continued)**

They are pretty good, and good about having to make arrangements when it comes to the bill. They are very nice that way.

**Billing/Finance – Negative Responses**

I always pay my bill online. But on the website, it doesn't remember your information. Each time you log in, you have to put in the routing number and the account information. You have to put it in every time. That's a big pain. They need a program that remembers that identification information so you don't have to re-enter it every time.

I have had seven and one half years of service and have never missed a payment, and then I got a delinquent statement with the next month's payment. I found it unfriendly. A phone call would have been nice. They need to keep it more friendly and happy for true Vermont based families.

I have my bill prepaid out of my check. It says it's due on the 30th, yet it's taken out on the 15th. I'd rather my payment be taken on the date it is due. I want my money to stay in the bank as long as possible. I also don't like an "automated answer" when I call in. Every time I call in, I get some kind of automated thing. I don't ever get to talk to an employee.

I want to be positive and tell you in general we're very satisfied with them. We did have the problem with the payment error on their part. Now they promote they are a co-op with the "down home family feel" but when you don't pay, it's big business and you're only a number. We always (and our record shows) pay on time. Yet, it was a very distasteful experience. They did correct the error, apologize, and give us a \$5 credit. I want to pay online and have the payment recorded electronically.

The way the bills are jumping up and down, I don't think it is accurate. We are not home during the day, so we can't figure out why it jumps up and down.

**Billing/Finance – Neutral Responses**

I would prefer the graph on the bill to have numbers on it so I could tell the kilowatts used. I liked the annual meeting. I could take the children too with all the hands-on educational things. They would like to see it again.

Let us pay our bill by credit card.

You are 100 times better than GMC. I want to set up all my payments online. I wonder if I can switch to Waterbury.

**Additional Comments  
(continued)**

**Rates/Fees – Positive Responses**

I am very satisfied. They have reasonable rates.

The co-op is very good and reasonable.

**Rates/Fees – Negative Responses**

Cut the rates down.

Everything is fine except the rates.

I am frustrated with them. I would like to comment that I requested help with my meter problem. They told me I was on my own. I was actually denied help. I'm in a small 2 bedroom apartment. My dad is next door. My bill is higher than his and he has a hot tub, pool, and 5 bedrooms. I would like to talk to someone again and get more help. My bill is \$200-\$250 a month.

I am pretty happy with what they have done. Overall, the power bill is expensive every month and seems to increase over time.

I am very pleased with the co-op. I would like lower rates.

I can't read. I wish the rates were lower.

I do not want any more rate increases.

I don't like paying high electric rates.

I don't like them at all. They have high rates and poor customer service.

I haven't tried to use online billing. Don't they charge a \$25 fee for paying online? I can't have any additional cost because I'm on a fixed income. I can't pay more for green power either. I'm on a fixed income.

I think the rates have gone up. I've done everything I can to be conservative and even with my efforts, it's still rising. I'm frustrated. I would like to have information. Is there any kind of service available to me to help me be more energy efficient?

I want cheaper rates.

I wish their rates would go down. The rates have really gone up.

I wish they could figure out how to keep rates down. I know in different places they are lower.

I would encourage them to just keep rates down. All their talk about trying to lower monthly electric bills actually lowers their revenues and then they raise rates. So it's a "Catch 22" for the customer.

**Additional Comments**  
**Rates/Fees – Negative Responses**  
**(continued)**

If they could lower the rates, that would be wonderful. They are wonderful people, but the rates are too high. If I could generate my own electricity, I would.

It seems that our rates are some of highest in the state, for the amount of outages we have.

Lower the rates! Even if it is just a little bit. We try to do everything we can to save electricity.

Other than the price, I don't have a problem. I think they do a good job, but the rates are high.

Reduce the rates. I have an all-electric house so it is very expensive, but I like the convenience.

The bill keeps increasing each year. I feel it is too high.

The co-op is okay but the rate is high.

The co-op rates are too high.

The proposed wind development should not happen. Wind power has not proven to deliver on its promise. Wind power is not green. The tactics VEC in partnership with Green Mountain Power used to coerce uneducated and naive people of Lowell to vote for the wind project are despicable. Going door to door, registering voters with the sole intention of having their project voted for is despicable. Lying at public meetings is despicable, etc. etc. In reading my newsletter, I was appalled my rates increased because many of their big consumers of electricity were consuming less.

The service is good. Lower the prices. Other than that, I am happy with them.

They need to lower their rates. With today's economy the way it is, they are killing us.

We lose electricity 15 times a year and we have the highest rates. I would ask for more dependability. Also, how can you access the website for outage information when you don't have any power?

When we go to Florida each winter we have to shut everything off and turn everything back on when we come back. The prices could be better. The disconnect and connect prices are way too high. We have been a customer for a long time and wish those charges would be lower.

**Rates/Fees – Neutral Responses**

Keep the rates as low as you can. (3 mentions)

Do everything you can to lower the rates. Don't pay board members. They should volunteer.

I think perhaps I would like to see them "forewarn" people if they are anticipating a rate increase. They need to give us a heads up.

**Additional Comments  
(continued)**

**Electric Power/Renewable Energy**

Get those surges under control. We lose appliances due to surges. I like that they are teaming up with wind power on Lowell Mountain.

I am hoping they get to do the wind turbines. I am all for it.

I hope they go green and get away from oil. Go wind. The problems in the Gulf with the oil should encourage support for green power.

I think they should do everything they can to get out of getting their electricity from Vermont Yankee. They need to get into providing electricity by using renewable energy sources.

Overall I am very satisfied. I am opposed to wind power.

The proposed wind development should not happen. Wind power has not proven to deliver on its promise. Wind power is not green. The tactics VEC in partnership with Green Mountain Power used to coerce uneducated and naive people of Lowell to vote for the wind project are despicable. Going door to door, registering voters with the sole intention of having their project voted for is despicable. Lying at public meetings is despicable, etc. etc. In reading my newsletter, I was appalled my rates increased because many of their big consumers of electricity were consuming less.

Get electric power from renewable sources, not nuclear power.

I do not care about green power.

I hope they service me with responsibility to the environment. It is all too easy to take advantage of everything of our resources, without regard to our natural environment and the other things such as the creatures and living things around us.

I'm concerned if they close the nuclear plant where are we going to get the power? I would rather see nuclear power, wind, and solar, and make it affordable to the average customer. What you don't use could be returned to the grid and distributed elsewhere. When I called in about a power outage, they couldn't give me much information, that's why I rated them a "2".

Provide energy that does not cause environmental damage.

They could just as well stay as they are, rather than getting wind power.

They should invest in the time in making hydro electricity.

What if I was to put up a wind tower? If there was more power that I produced that I didn't need, would the co-op buy it back? I'd be interested in generating my own wind power. It would be a benefit to the co-op. No, you don't need to call me. I'll look on the website for the information.

I wish they would not get power from Hydro Quebec.

Build another nuclear plant besides the one they have now.



**Additional Comments**  
**Electric Power/Renewable Energy**  
**(continued)**

Buy power from Canada.

I think they should find another resource for power, i.e. nuclear power.

**Energy Efficiency / Energy Audits – Neutral Responses**

I have UPS devices and every night they hum and then click, click, click. Can you tell why this happens?

I think the rates have gone up. I've done everything I can to be conservative and even with my efforts, it's still rising. I'm frustrated. I would like to have information. Is there any kind of service available to me to help me be more energy efficient?

I would like my home to be audited; it is old and the electricity runs high. It was \$190.00 one month and we keep the lights off during the day.

I would like to know why my usage is high but I don't want to pay for an audit. We have a lot of power surges and brown outs.

**Newsletter/Information – Neutral Responses**

A text message would be best. Also, trim the trees.

I can't go on the website when the power is out.

We lose electricity 15 times a year and we have the highest rates. I would ask for more dependability. Also, how can you access the website for outage information when you don't have any power?

**Annual Meeting – Positive Responses**

I would prefer the graph on the bill to have numbers on it so I could tell the kilowatts used. I liked the annual meeting. I could take the children too with all the hands-on educational things. They would like to see it again.

**Annual Meeting – Neutral Responses**

Don't shut the power off in the morning when we're getting ready for work. I would like more information on community education and when the meetings are.

# Questionnaire

**Vermont Electric Cooperative (06/02/10)**  
**RESIDENTIAL SATISFACTION AND CO-OP COMMITMENT SURVEY**

ID # \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer Code # \_\_\_\_\_

**INTRODUCTION:**

May I please speak with the head of household who has or shares responsibility for reviewing and paying the electric utility bills? Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am with NRECA Market Research Services. We are conducting a confidential survey for **Vermont Electric Cooperative** on the service they provide you. Let me assure you, we are not selling anything. Our survey will take about 11 minutes. May I continue now?

Yes ... **Continue**       No ... When would be a more convenient time for me to call back?  
 Date to call: \_\_\_\_\_ Time to call: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How long have you received your electric service from Vermont Electric Cooperative? (*tenure1*)

- 1 Less than 1 year       3 3 to 5 years       5 10 to 14 years       7 20 years or more  
 2 1 to 2 years       4 6 to 9 years       6 15 to 19 years       8 Don't Know/Refused

**Satisfaction and Performance Ratings**

2. First, on a 5-point scale where 1 means "very poor" and 5 means "excellent," how would you rate Vermont Electric Cooperative's performance on the following? (**Do not randomize.**)

		Very Poor			Excellent	DK
a. the reliability of service and frequency of interruptions ( <i>elec_svc</i> )	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. the courtesy, understanding and helpfulness of employees to your inquiries or problems ( <i>courtesy</i> )	1	2	3	4	5	6
c. the restoration of power after an outage ( <i>restore2</i> )	1	2	3	4	5	6
d. the accuracy of meter reading and billing ( <i>v2</i> )	1	2	3	4	5	6
e. the speed and efficiency of responding to customers ( <i>respond2</i> )	1	2	3	4	5	6

3. Now, please consider all your experiences to date with Vermont Electric. Using a 10-point scale on which "1" means "very dissatisfied" and "10" means "very satisfied," how satisfied are you with Vermont Electric Cooperative? (*satis*)

Very dissatisfied   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Very Satisfied

4. Now, again on a 5-point scale where 1 means "very poor" and 5 means "excellent," how would you rate Vermont Electric Co-op's performance on the following? (**Randomize after b.**)

On ...		Very Poor			Excellent	DK
a. the overall customer service they provide ( <i>cust_svc</i> )	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. delivering good value for the money ( <i>value</i> )	1	2	3	4	5	6
c. resolving any issues or problems ( <i>resolve</i> )	1	2	3	4	5	6
d. having highly-trained, professional employees ( <i>htemp</i> )	1	2	3	4	5	6
e. having consumers' best interests at heart ( <i>best_int</i> )	1	2	3	4	5	6
f. communicating with you and keeping you informed ( <i>communic</i> )	1	2	3	4	5	6
g. operating with concern for the environment ( <i>environ</i> )	1	2	3	4	5	6
h. supporting the local community ( <i>community</i> )	1	2	3	4	5	6

### Contact

5. In the past year, did you contact VERMONT ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE for any reason?  
[ ]1 Yes [ ]2 No *Skip to Q.10*
6. What was the REASON for the most recent call or visit you made? [Do not read/Check all that apply]  
\_\_\_Reason (**specify**) \_\_\_Don't Know/Refused (*skip to Q10*)
7. Did you contact VERMONT ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE for any other reason? IF SO, what?  
\_\_\_Reason (**specify**) \_\_\_ No (*skip to Q10*) \_\_\_Don't Know/Refused
8. Did you contact VERMONT ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE for any other reason? IF SO, what?  
\_\_\_Reason (**specify**) \_\_\_ No (*skip to Q10*) \_\_\_Don't Know/Refused
9. Based on your contact with Vermont Electric, was your experience much better, somewhat better, about what you expected, somewhat worse, or much worse than you expected? (*cntceval*)  
[ ]1 Much worse [ ]4 Somewhat worse [ ]3 As expected [ ]2 Somewhat better [ ]1 Much better

### Electric Service Performance

10. Now, on a 5-point scale where 1 means "very poor" and 5 means "excellent," how would you rate Vermont Electric Co-op's performance on the following ...? (*randomize*)
- | On ...  | Very Poor |   |   |   |   | Excellent | DK |
|---|-----------|---|---|---|---|-----------|----|
| a. Keeping blinks and momentary outages to a minimum ( <i>limit_blink</i> )     | 1         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6         |    |
| b. Keeping the number of longer outages to a minimum ( <i>limit_outg</i> )      | 1         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6         |    |
| c. Keeping you informed on the status of outages ( <i>outinfo2</i> )            | 1         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6         |    |
| d. Providing consistent voltage without surges or brownouts ( <i>pwr_qal2</i> ) | 1         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6         |    |

### Rates and Fees

11. How would you rate Vermont Electric Co-op's performance on the following using a 5-point scale where 1 means "very poor" and 5 means "excellent?" (*randomize*)
- | On . . .   | Very Poor |   |   |   |   | Excellent | DK |
|--|-----------|---|---|---|---|-----------|----|
| a. Charging reasonable rates ( <i>reasrate</i> )                       | 1         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6         |    |
| b. Their monthly service fees ( <i>svcfees</i> )                       | 1         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6         |    |
| c. Providing accurate and easy to understand bills ( <i>clearbil</i> ) | 1         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6         |    |
| d. Having convenient payment options ( <i>payoptn</i> )                | 1         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6         |    |
| e. Helping customers keep bills as low as possible ( <i>v3</i> )       | 1         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6         |    |
12. Compared to other electric companies, would you say Vermont Electric's rates are higher, lower, about the same or you aren't aware? (*ratecomp*)  
[ ]1 Higher [ ]2 Lower [ ]3 About the same [ ]4 Not aware

### Power Supply

13. On a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 is "not at all important" and 5 means "extremely important," how important is it to you for Vermont Electric to provide environmentally friendly "green power" from the following renewable energy sources? (*randomize*)
- |                | Not at all Important |   |   |   | Extremely Important |   | DK    |
|----------------|----------------------|---|---|---|---------------------|---|-------|
| a. Wind        | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5                   | 6 | (v11) |
| b. Solar       | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5                   | 6 | (v12) |
| c. Hydro       | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5                   | 6 | (v13) |
| d. Gas Methane | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5                   | 6 | (v14) |

e. Bio-mass 1 2 3 4 5 6 (v15)

14. If electricity from renewable energy sources were not available at the same rates you are paying now, how much more would you be willing to pay, if anything, to get this green power? Would you pay ... **[Stop when respondent agrees]** (greenpay)

1 \$20 more per month       3 \$10 more per month       5 \$3 more, or       7 Don't Know/Refused  
 2 \$15 more per month       4 \$5 more per month       6 Nothing more per month

15. How do you feel about Vermont Electric distributing electricity generated in part by nuclear power? Please rate your opinion of this on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means you are "entirely against" nuclear power and 5 means you are "entirely for" it.

Entirely opposed 1 2 3 4 5 Entirely for

### **Cooperative Commitment**

16. Do you view yourself as a member-owner or as a customer of your electric co-op, or both? (mem\_id2)

1 Member/owner       2 Customer       3 Both       4 Don't Know / Refused

17. Concerning Vermont Electric Cooperative, have you done any of the following in the past **3 years**? Did you...

a. Attend an annual meeting? (annmeet)       1 Yes       2 No       3 Don't Know

b. Vote in a co-op election or on some issue? (voted)       1 Yes       2 No       3 Don't Know

c. Speak with a board director or trustee? (spoken)       1 Yes       2 No       3 Don't Know

18. **[If 17c=yes, ask:]** Using a 5-point scale on which "1" means very poor and "5" means excellent, how would you rate your relationship with your Director?

Very poor 1 2 3 4 5 Excellent (v8)

### **Communications**

19. How much of the quarterly newsletter called "Co-op Life" do you usually read? (readquan)

1 all of it       2 most of it       3 some       4 none, or       5 not aware of it/don't receive it

20. Do you have Internet access either at home or at work? (has\_isp)

1 At home       2 At work (Skip to Q22)       3 Both at home and work       4 Neither (Skip to Q26c)

21. Is your Internet access at home dial-up or a higher speed form of access such as cable, satellite, or DSL service? (int\_type)

1 Dial-up       2 Higher speed access       3 Don't Know

22. Have you ever visited Vermont Electric's website? (website)

1 Yes       2 No

23. Are you aware that VEC offers an electronic billing and payment option called eBill that enables members to review and pay their monthly electric bill online?

1 AWARE       2 NOT AWARE (v16)

24. Are you aware that VEC has an outage center online through a link on their website that provides up-to-date outage information as outages occur? (If yes) Have you used the outage center?

1 AWARE       2 NOT AWARE (v16)       3 HAVE USED

25. (IF Q24=HAVE USED, ASK) Using a 5-point scale where 1 means "not at all valuable" and 5 means "very valuable," how valuable did you find the outage center to be?

Not at all valuable 1 2 3 4 5 Very valuable (homedisp)

26. In the future, would you say you would definitely or probably, might or might not, or you probably or definitely would not use the following services from VEC? (*randomize*)

	Definitely Not	Probably Not	Might or Might Not	Probably Would	Definitely Would
a. Review and pay your monthly electric bill online using VEC's eBill program ( <i>rev_ebil</i> )	1	2	3	4	5
b. Read "Co-op Life" as an e-newsletter ( <i>newsweb</i> )	1	2	3	4	5
c. Receive important information from the co-op (such as the status of outages) by cell phone text messages or voice mails ( <i>newsinfo</i> )	1	2	3	4	5

**DEMOGRAPHICS** *Thank you for your patience. There are just a few final questions that are used for classification purposes only. This information is completely confidential.*

1. How many people live in your household including yourself? (*hh\_num*) 1 2 3 4 5 6 or more

2. What is your current employment status? (*employnt*)

[ ] 1 Work full-time      [ ] 3 At home full-time family care giver      [ ] 5 Student

[ ] 2 Work part-time      [ ] 4 Retired      [ ] 6 Not employed, not looking

[ ] 7 Not employed but looking

3. What is your average monthly electric bill? (*bill3*)  1 \$50 or less     3 \$101 - \$150     5 \$201 to \$250

2 \$51 - \$100     4 \$151 - \$200     6 \$251 to \$300

7 Over \$300

4. Into which of the following categories does your annual household income fall before taxes? (*income1*)

1 Less than \$15,000.       4 \$50,001 to \$75,000.       7 \$125,001 to \$150,000

2 \$15,000 to \$25,000       5 \$75,001 to \$100,000.       8 Over \$150,000

3 \$25,001 to \$50,000       6 \$100,001 to \$125,000       9 DK/Refused

5. Pre-coded geographic areas from co-op database/member files: \_\_\_\_\_ [DO NOT ASK]

6. [DO NOT ASK] Gender:  1 Male.     2 Female.

**Thank you for your time and cooperation. It is very much appreciated.**