

2012 RESIDENTIAL SATISFACTION



6/19/2012

Vermont Electric Cooperative

Survey Results Prepared by:

NRECA
**MARKET
RESEARCH
SERVICES**

Vermont Electric Cooperative

Residential Report Summary

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2012 Residential Satisfaction

VERMONT ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following are the top-line findings for the study's main objectives based on the results of a telephone survey of 375 randomly selected residential members of Vermont Electric Cooperative conducted in May of 2012:

- Overall satisfaction with Vermont Electric Cooperative is good. Although lower than the Co-op Norms, the mean rating of 8.41 is significantly higher than the 2011 study as well as most of the previous studies.
 - The mean ratings for five of the 22 performance attributes are higher than 4.50, which can be considered excellent, and an additional 13 are rated above 4.00, which can be considered good. Compared to the 2011 study, the mean ratings for two attributes improved significantly (*keeping blinks and momentary outages to a minimum* and *keeping longer outages to a minimum*) while one decreased significantly (*having convenient payment options*). There have also been a number of significant improvements from studies done before 2011. Remarkably, the lower mean rating for *convenient payment options* is the only significant decline among the various attributes since 2003, and payment options is still evaluated near the excellent mark.
 - In 2012, **Cost** has become the strongest driver of overall satisfaction. (In 2011, it was the second key driver, after resolving issues.) This area includes the lowest-rated attributes in the study. Of course this is not surprising in a still-struggling economy, and there has been improvement: *charging reasonable rates* has improved significantly since the 2009 study. Continue communications with members about how VEC is working to keep costs down, why increases are necessary, and energy efficiency steps they can take to help keep their bills low.
- Member Service** is the second-strongest driver of overall satisfaction. In contrast to cost, the three highest-rated attributes in the study – *the courtesy, understanding, and helpfulness of employees, having highly-trained and professional employees and the overall customer service they provide* – are in this area. In fact, fewer members had reason to contact VEC in the past year compared to previous studies, and evaluations of contact have improved significantly.

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 residential 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).



Vermont Electric Cooperative has previously conducted residential member satisfaction studies, with the most recent completed in 2011. 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:

- VEC last raised rates on January 1, 2011. Members were notified six weeks in advance when the cooperative filed for the rate increase with the Vermont Public Service Board. A number of media were used to inform the membership of the upcoming increase, including press releases, the co-op newsletter, messages on the bills, and the co-op website.
- Hurricane Irene hit the area in August 2011. Although VEC's service territory fared better than other areas of the state, 10,000 members experienced an outage and there was extensive damage.
- In the spring of 2012, two separate workplace accidents took the life of a VEC employee and critically injured another. Investigations into the accident that resulted in a fatality are ongoing.
- A special election was held with record turnout on July 26, 2011 to approve a transmission line upgrade. This was very controversial because the transmission upgrade also supported an industrial wind project on a mountain ridge.

- In July 2011, Bert Lague passed away after 30 years of service as a VEC director. A new director was appointed (George Lague).
- The VEC Green Team was launched, which is a voluntary program for members to contribute to support of renewable energy programs in VEC's service territory.

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 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:** Derive the key drivers of overall satisfaction and to what degree consumer needs are being met to help Vermont Electric Cooperative prioritize any improvement efforts.
- **Member Identity:** Estimate the proportion of consumers who identify themselves as member-owners, member-customers, or just customers of the co-op.
- **Communications:** Explore other areas of specific interest to VEC, including the importance of providing green power from a variety of sources, newsletter readership, and communication from/contact with the co-op.
- **Member Demographics and Segmentation:** Provide demographics of the residential 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. On average, the telephone interviews lasted approximately 11 minutes.

Calls were completed with 375 residential members of Vermont Electric Cooperative between May 16 and May 29, 2012, with sampling done proportionate to District and connect date. 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 residential 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 eight studies conducted between 2003 and 2011. Comparisons are also made to results from similar studies conducted by 58 co-ops among more than 22,000 residential members across the nation between February 2008 and December 2011. 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.

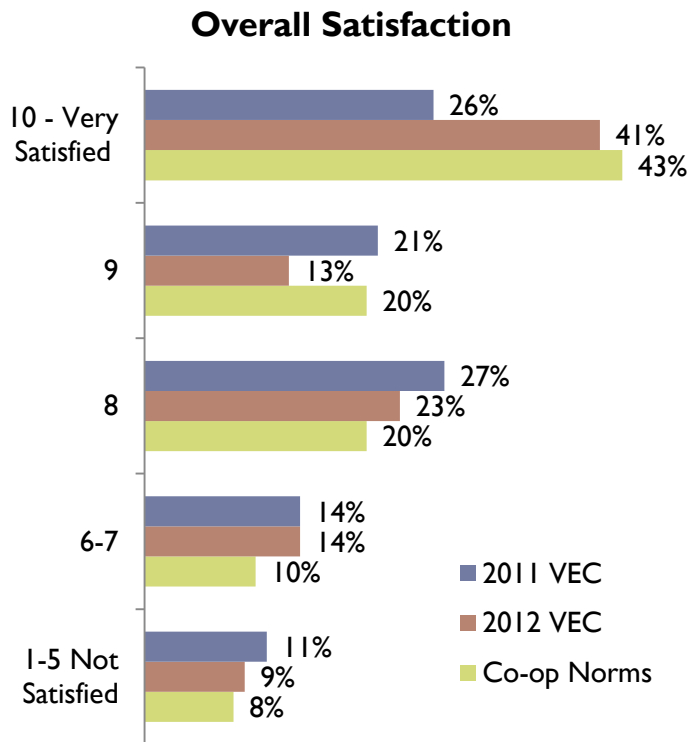
Differences between member segments, such as differences by age or service tenure, are pointed out and characterized as being either statistically significant or not. When the term “significant” is used, this refers to the certainty of a difference, not the magnitude or size of the difference. Significance 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 among Vermont Electric Cooperative’s residential members is good. The mean overall satisfaction rating is 8.41 on a 10-point scale and 54% give ratings of “9” or “10”.



While the mean overall satisfaction rating is lower than the Co-op Norms (8.61), it is significantly higher than the 2011 study as well as most of the previous studies going back to 2003.

Those paying lower electric bills, those living alone or with one other person, and retired members are significantly more satisfied than are their individual counterparts.



Performance Quality Attributes

Members were asked to evaluate 22 performance quality attributes related to member service, image, electric service, communication, billing and cost. On all but four of the attributes measured, the mean ratings are higher than 4.00, a “good” rating on a 5-point scale. Additionally, mean ratings for five of the attributes are above 4.50, which can be considered excellent.

VEC is rated positively on most of the attributes, with the highest mean ratings for the following. More than 80% rate each of these attributes positively (rating of 4 or 5):

- The courtesy, understanding, and helpfulness of employees to inquiries or problems (4.64)
- Having highly-trained, professional employees (4.58)
- The overall customer service they provide (4.54)
- The accuracy of meter reading and billing (4.52)
- Providing consistent voltage without surges or brownouts (4.51)
- Keeping blinks and momentary outages to a minimum (4.47)
- Keeping the number of longer outages to a minimum (4.47)
- Providing accurate and easy to understand bills (4.47)
- Having convenient payment options (4.46)
- The speed and efficiency of responding to customers (4.45)

The attributes on which VEC is rated least well are all cost-related: *the monthly service fees* (53% rating “4” or “5”), *charging reasonable rates* (56%), *helping customers keep bills as low as possible* (60%), and *delivering good value for the money* (67%). These are areas that are often rated lower in cooperative satisfaction research, but with mean ratings below 4.00, this may be cause for concern.

Performance Quality Trends and Benchmarks

Mean ratings and top two box ratings have not changed significantly from 2011 for most of the performance quality attributes. However, many are significantly higher than the 2010 study.

The three significant changes since the 2011 study are *keeping blinks and momentary outages to a minimum* (improved), *keeping the number of longer outages to a minimum* (improved) and *having convenient payment options* (declined).

Mean ratings for many of the attributes are significantly higher in 2012 than in 2010, namely:

- The courtesy, understanding, and helpfulness of employees
- Resolving any issues or problems
- The overall customer service they provide
- Having highly-trained, professional employees
- The speed and efficiency of responding to customers
- Communicating with members and keeping them informed
- The restoration of power after an outage
- The reliability of service and frequency of interruptions
- Keeping members informed on the status of outages
- Having consumers' best interests at heart
- Providing consistent voltage without surges or brownouts
- Keeping blinks and momentary outages to a minimum
- The accuracy of meter reading and billing
- Providing accurate and easy to understand bills

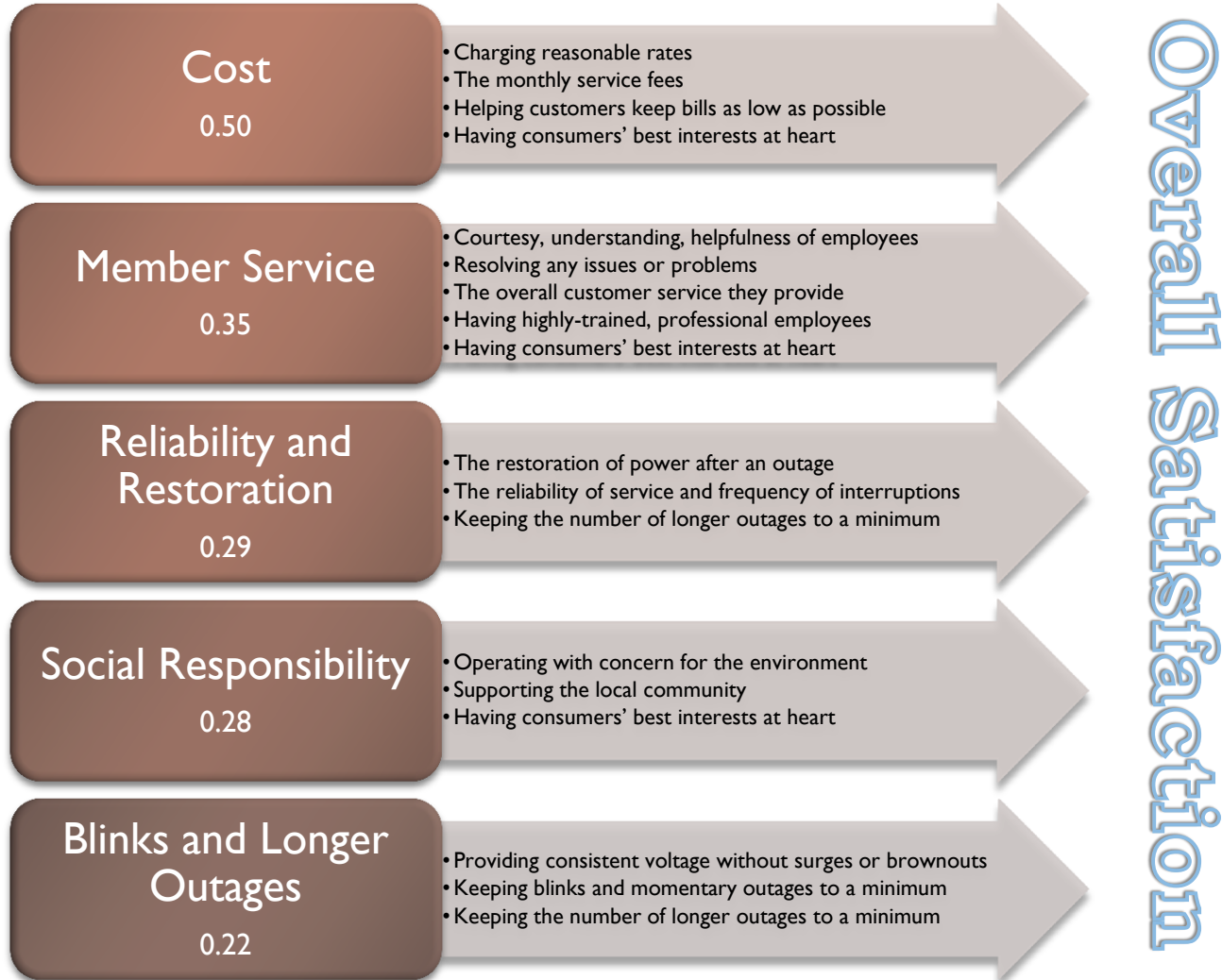
VEC members give ratings consistent with or lower than the Co-op Norms on most of the comparable attributes. The attributes with the biggest gaps between mean ratings are shown below.

Attribute	VEC Mean Rating	Co-op Norms Mean Rating	Gap
<i>Keeping blinks and momentary outages to a minimum</i>	4.47	4.32	+0.15
<i>Keeping members informed on the status of outages</i>	4.05	3.92	+0.13
<i>The restoration of power after an outage</i>	4.29	4.43	-0.14
<i>Charging reasonable rates</i>	3.58	3.74	-0.16
<i>Delivering good value for the money</i>	3.85	4.07	-0.22
<i>Operating with concern for the environment</i>	4.21	4.44	-0.23
<i>Supporting the local community</i>	4.21	4.46	-0.25
<i>Helping customers keep bills as low as possible</i>	3.66	4.17	-0.51

Prioritizing Improvement and Maintenance Efforts

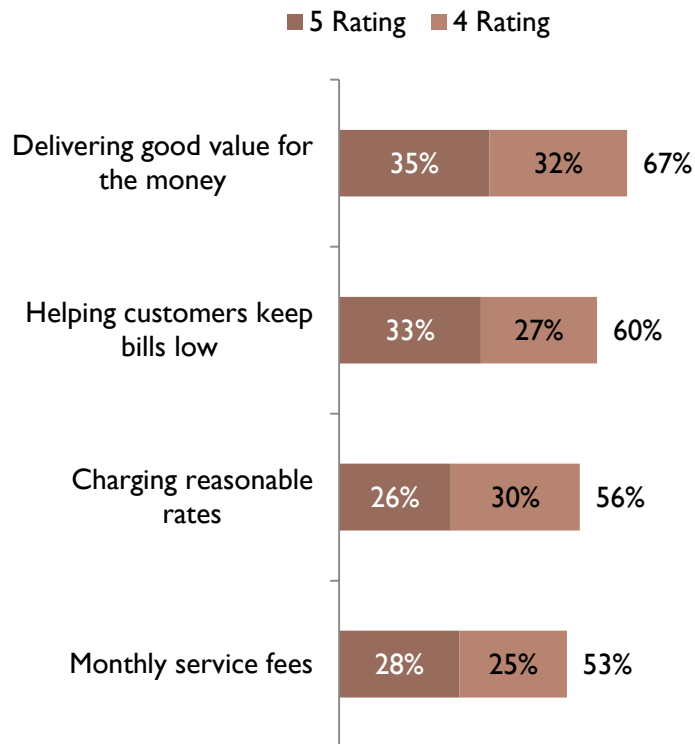
The key drivers of overall satisfaction among residential members are: cost, member service, reliability and restoration, social responsibility, and blinks and longer outages. Going forward, these are the areas that VEC should focus on most.

Regression analysis was used to determine the key drivers of overall satisfaction. The scores are to be interpreted relative to each other. For example, since cost has a score of 0.50 and *blinks and longer outages* has a score of 0.22, we can say that members' perception of the cost has over twice the impact on overall satisfaction as perceptions of their electric service. Attributes and factors not shown below are not significant drivers of overall satisfaction. More information on how the factors were formed and importance scores derived can be found in Appendix A.



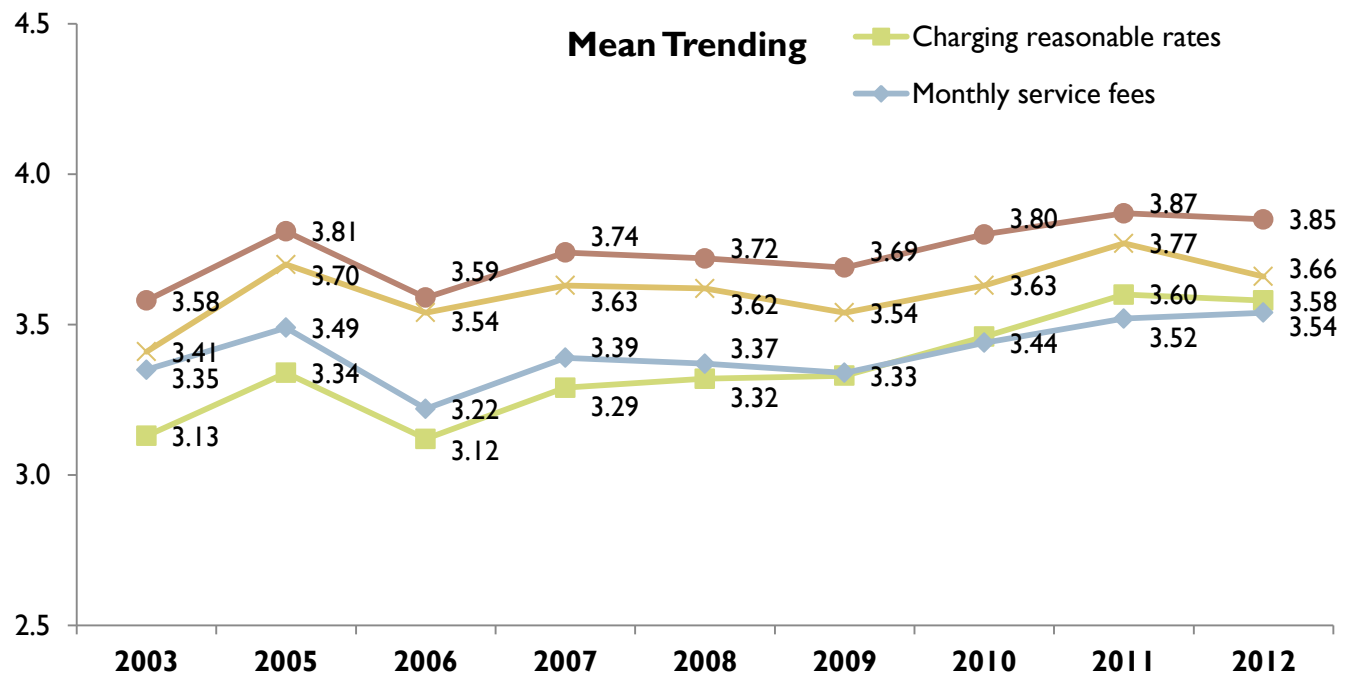
Cost

Cost is the strongest key driver of overall satisfaction. Not surprisingly, these attributes receive the lowest ratings in the study, lower than the Co-op Norms.



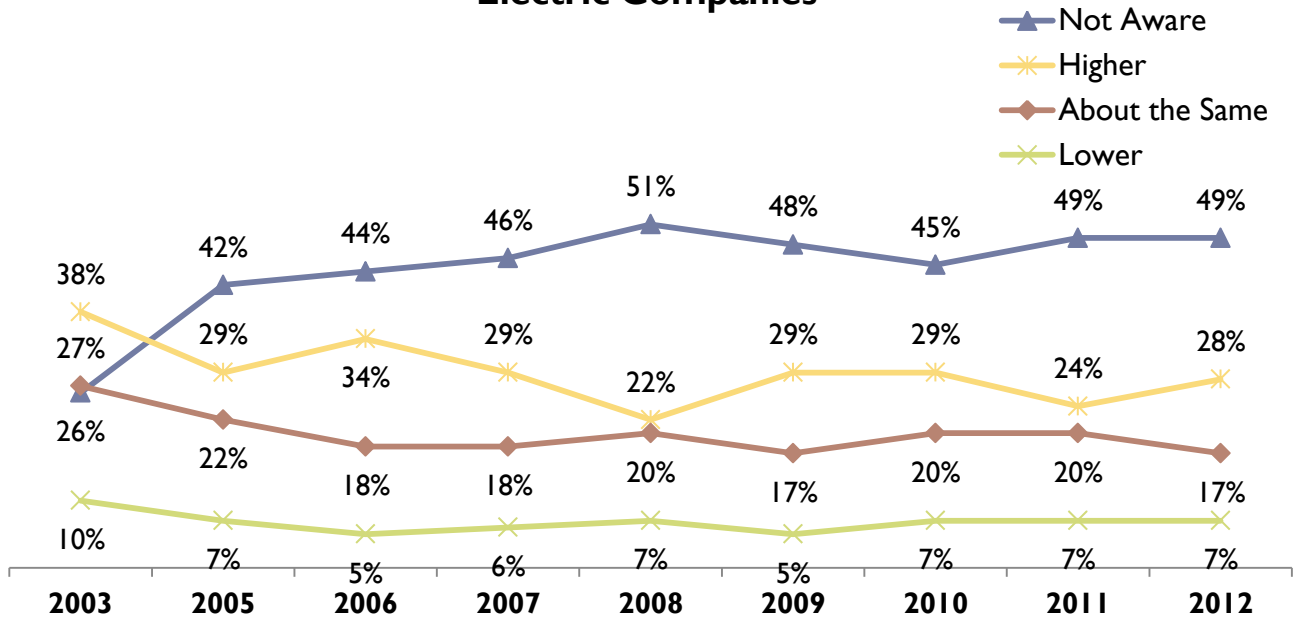
On the other hand, *charging reasonable rates* is evaluated significantly higher in 2012 than in the 2009 and earlier studies.

The mean ratings for all four of these attributes are higher than the 2003 and 2006 studies.



Forty-nine percent are not aware of how their rates compare to other electric companies. Members' perceptions of how their rates compare have not changed significantly from any recent studies (after 2003).

Vermont Electric's Rates Compared to Other Electric Companies



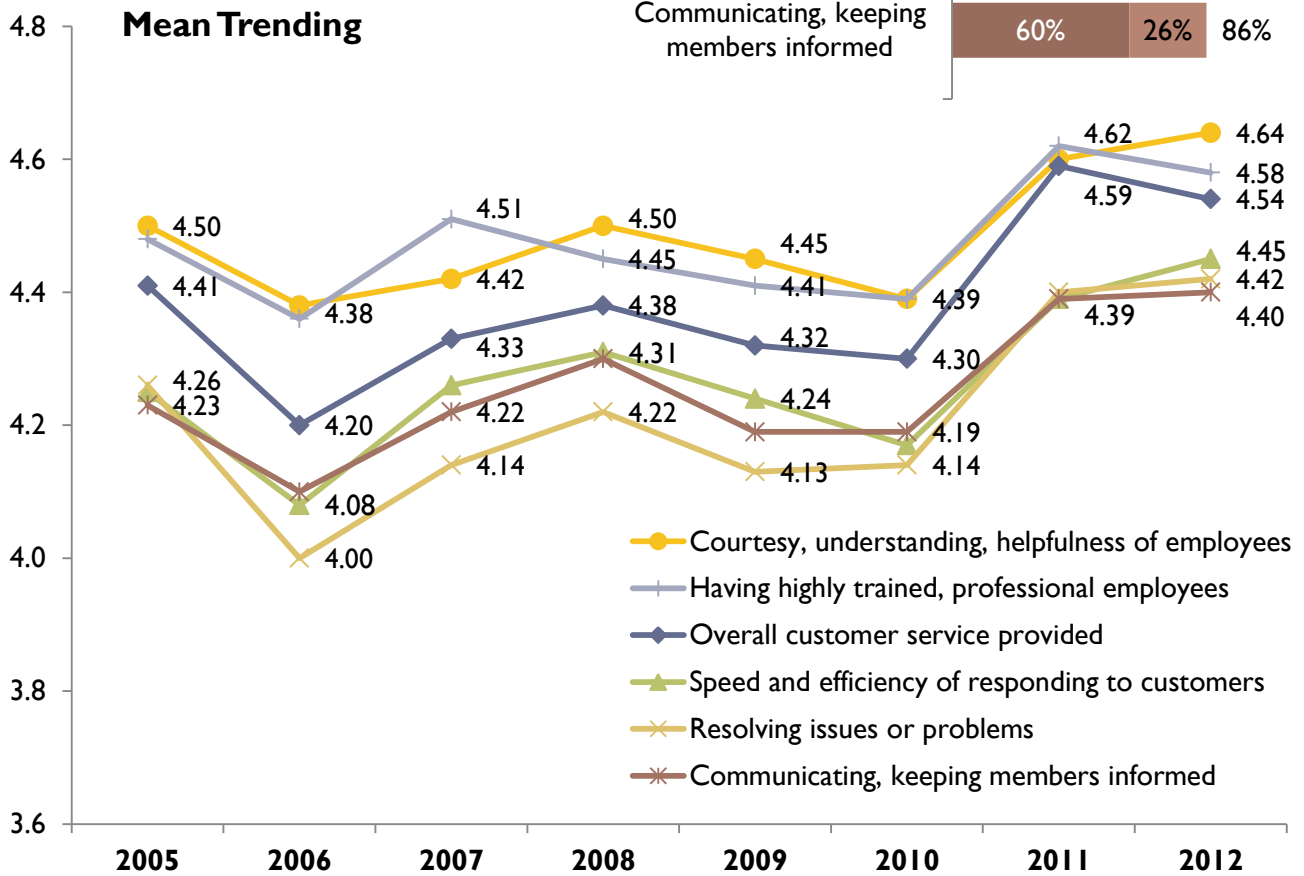
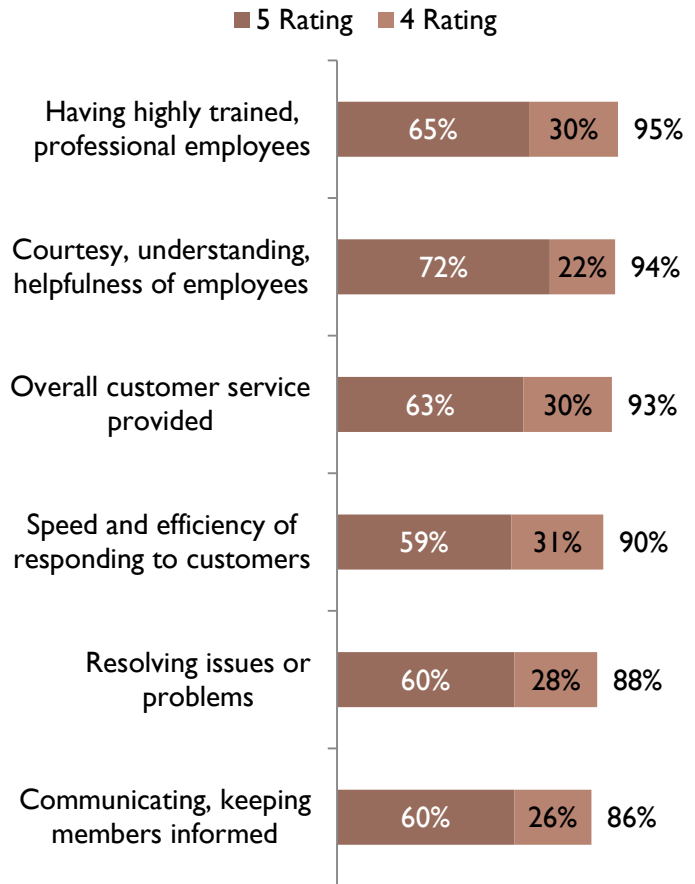
A regression analysis was also conducted to determine the key drivers of value. As shown below, the drivers are similar to those for overall satisfaction, with the addition of *providing accurate, easy to understand bills*. Although the perception of the cost of electricity by far has the strongest impact on the value members feel they receive, it is not the only factor that enters into the “value equation” among members of Vermont Electric Cooperative.

Key Drivers of Value	
Cost	0.64
Member Service	0.22
Social Responsibility	0.22
Blinks and Longer Outages	0.17
Reliability and Restoration	0.17
Providing Accurate, Easy to Understand Bills	0.09

Member Service and Communication

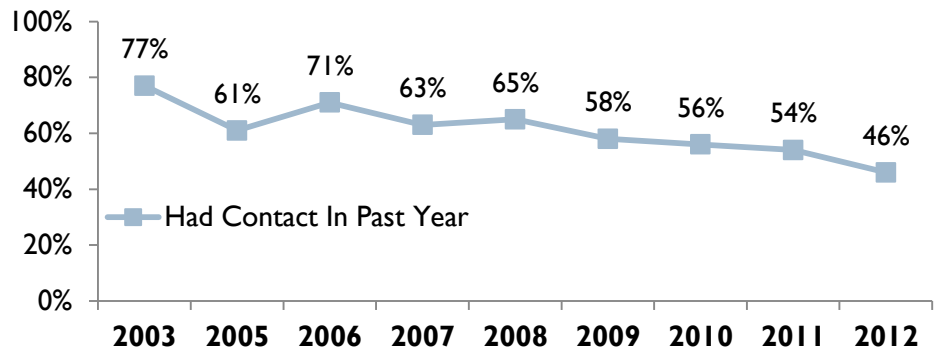
Member Service is the next-strongest key driver of overall satisfaction. This is an area in which VEC is doing very well, with more than eight in ten members giving high ratings for all of these attributes.

Mean ratings in 2012 for all six attributes are consistent with the 2011 study and significantly higher than in 2010 and many of the other previous studies.



Almost half of the members indicate they have contacted VEC over the past year. This is significantly less contact than in all of the previous studies. About half of those who contacted the co-op did so regarding an outage.

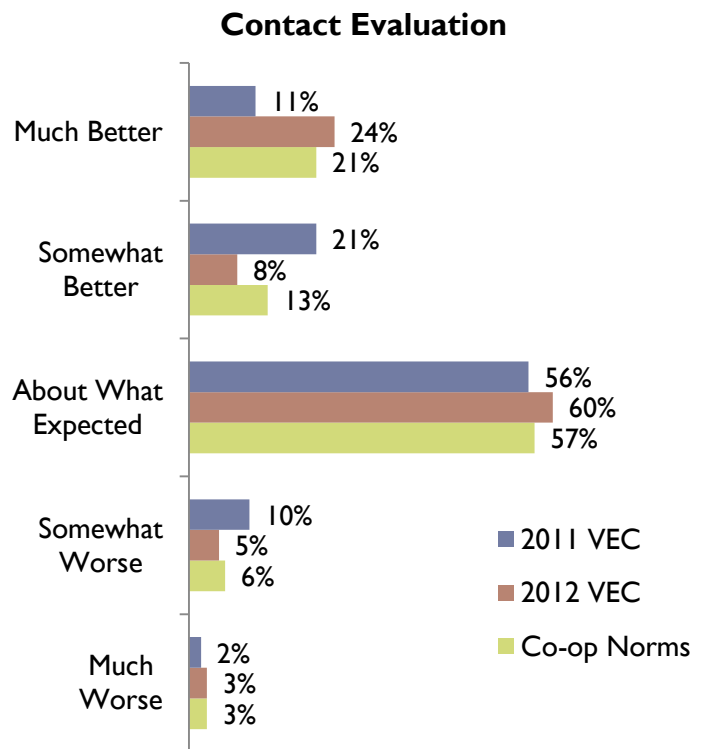
Other reasons for contact include having a question about a bill, general service, payment arrangements, and looking into a high bill. Contact evaluations are highest for general service; they are lowest for high bills.



Reason for Contact (Out of those who Contacted)	Percentage	Mean Contact Rating
Outage	48%	3.40
Question about bill	11%	3.84
General service	9%	4.06
Payment arrangements/assistance	8%	3.46
High bill	6%	2.44

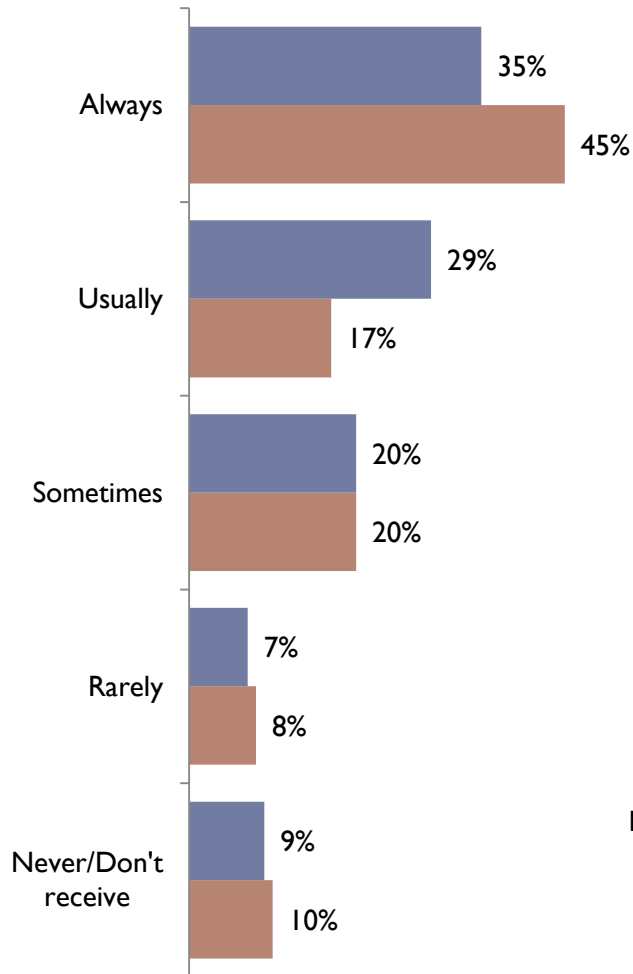
The vast majority of those who contacted VEC in the past year say their expectations were met or exceeded. One-third indicate their contact was somewhat or much better than expected. Compared to the 2011 study, the proportion of members who feel their contact was much better than expected has increased significantly.

Contact Rating	Overall Satisfaction
No Contact	8.67
Much Better	9.05
Somewhat Better	8.15
As Expected	8.04
Worse Than Expected	6.29



The frequency of reading *Co-op Life* has increased significantly since 2011, with 45% saying they always read the publication. More than eight in ten of those who read the newsletter feel that the length of it is about right.

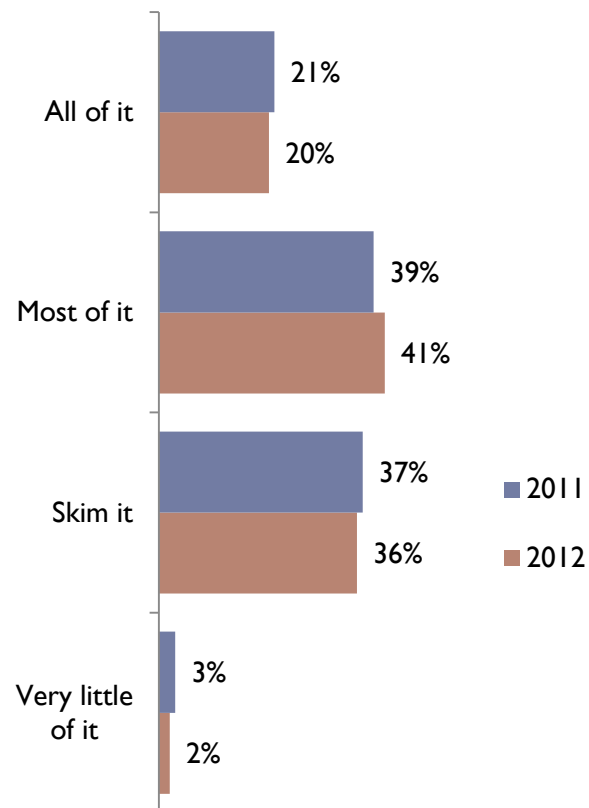
How Often Read Co-op Life



Members who are more satisfied overall with VEC, longer-tenured members, those paying lower monthly electric bills, those living alone, retired members, and less affluent members are significantly more likely than their individual counterparts to say they always read the newsletter.

How Thoroughly Read Co-op Life

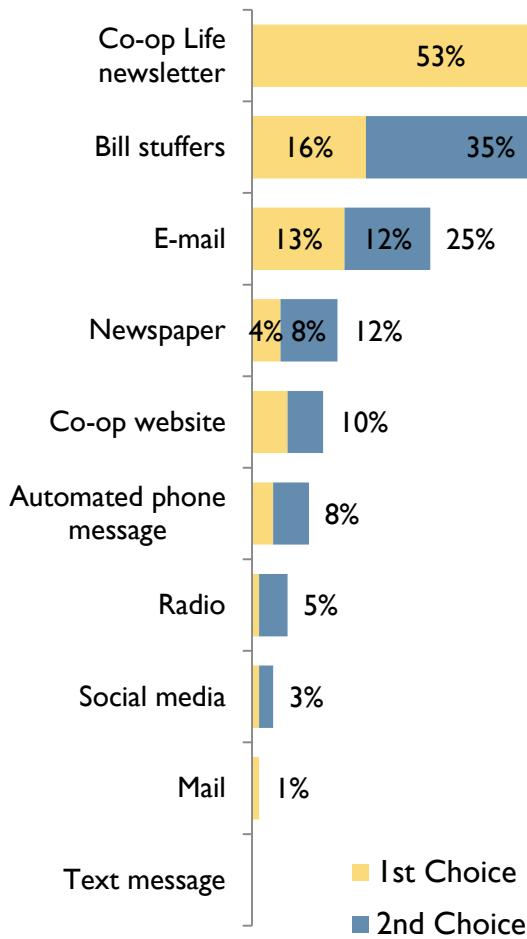
Asked of those who receive/read newsletter



Members indicate they prefer receiving information from VEC through the *Co-op Life* newsletter followed by bill stuffers. One-quarter indicate they prefer e-mail as either their first or second choice.

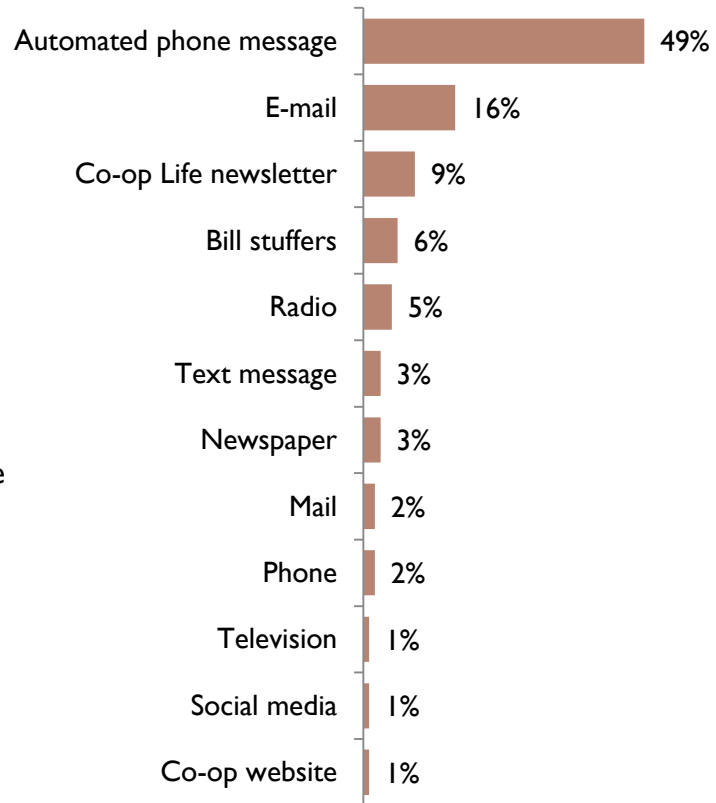
Newer members, those paying higher electric bills, those living in larger households, those who are currently employed, and more affluent members are significantly more likely than their individual counterparts to indicate a preference for e-mail. Although not all of the differences are statistically significant, these are also the segments that mention receiving information from the co-op’s website. Still, a majority of these member segments prefer the newsletter and bill stuffers over e-mail.

Preference For Communication



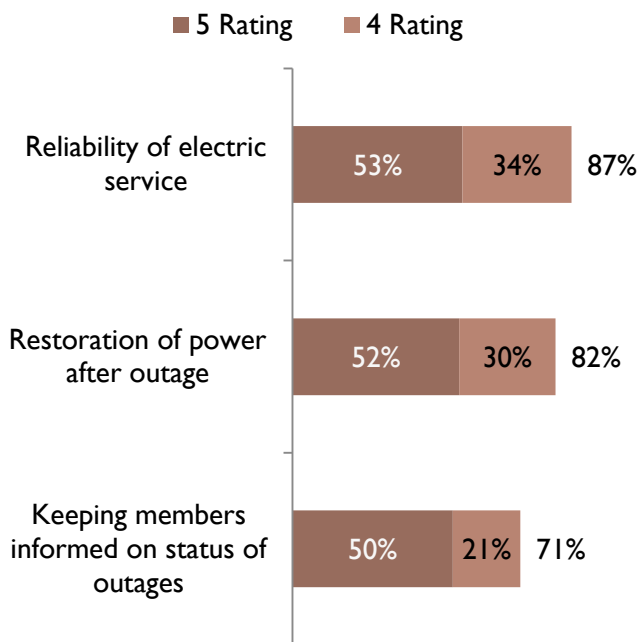
As would be expected, members prefer a more immediate form of communication for receiving critical or time-sensitive information. Almost half indicate they would want this type of information from an automated phone message while 16% prefer e-mail.

Preference For Receiving Critical or Time-Sensitive Information



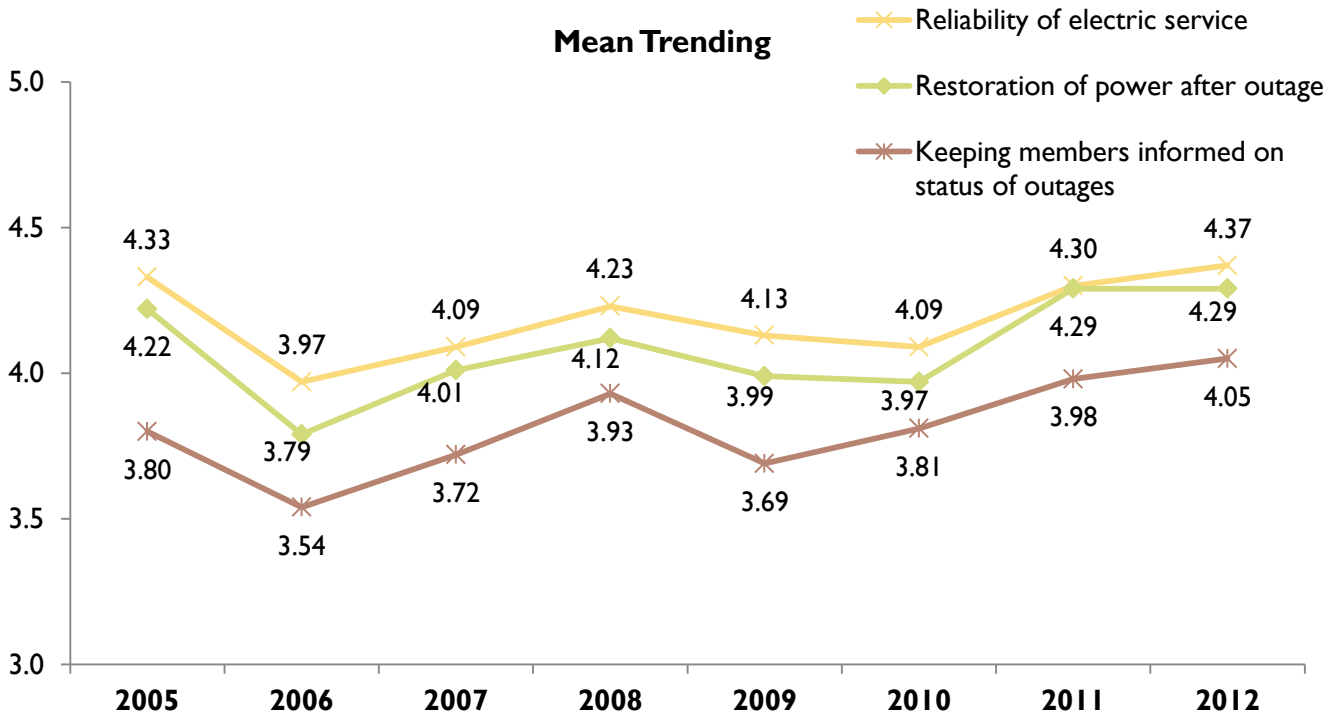
Electric Service

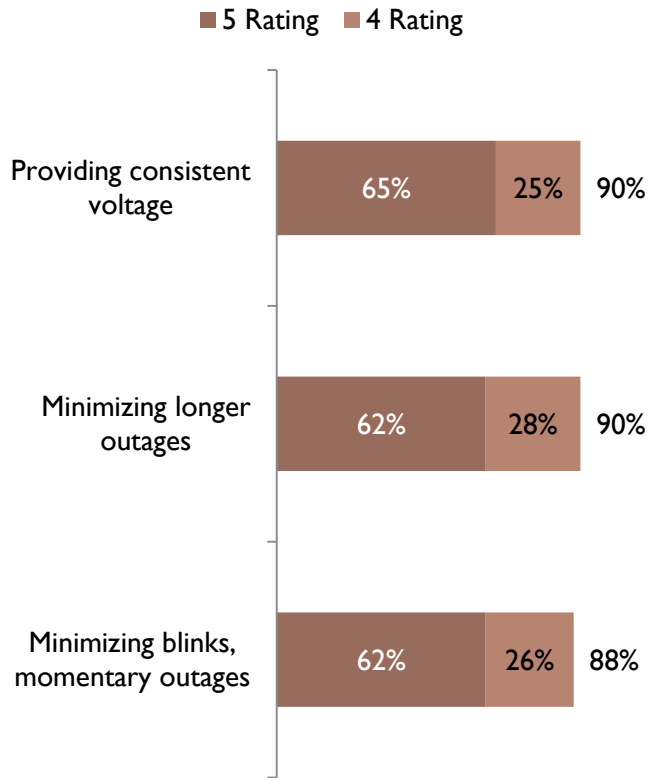
The next key driver of overall satisfaction is Reliability and Restoration. Similarly, Blinks and Longer Outages is another a key driver. This is an area in which VEC is rated positively and has been improving.



More than eight in ten members give positive ratings for the reliability of service and frequency of interruptions and the restoration of power after an outage. Although both are evaluated lower than the Co-op Norms, ratings have improved significantly since 2010.

Not a part of the key driver but certainly related to power restoration, the mean rating for keeping members informed on the status of outages is just above the 4.00 “good” threshold. It is significantly higher than the 2010 study as well as the Co-op Norms.

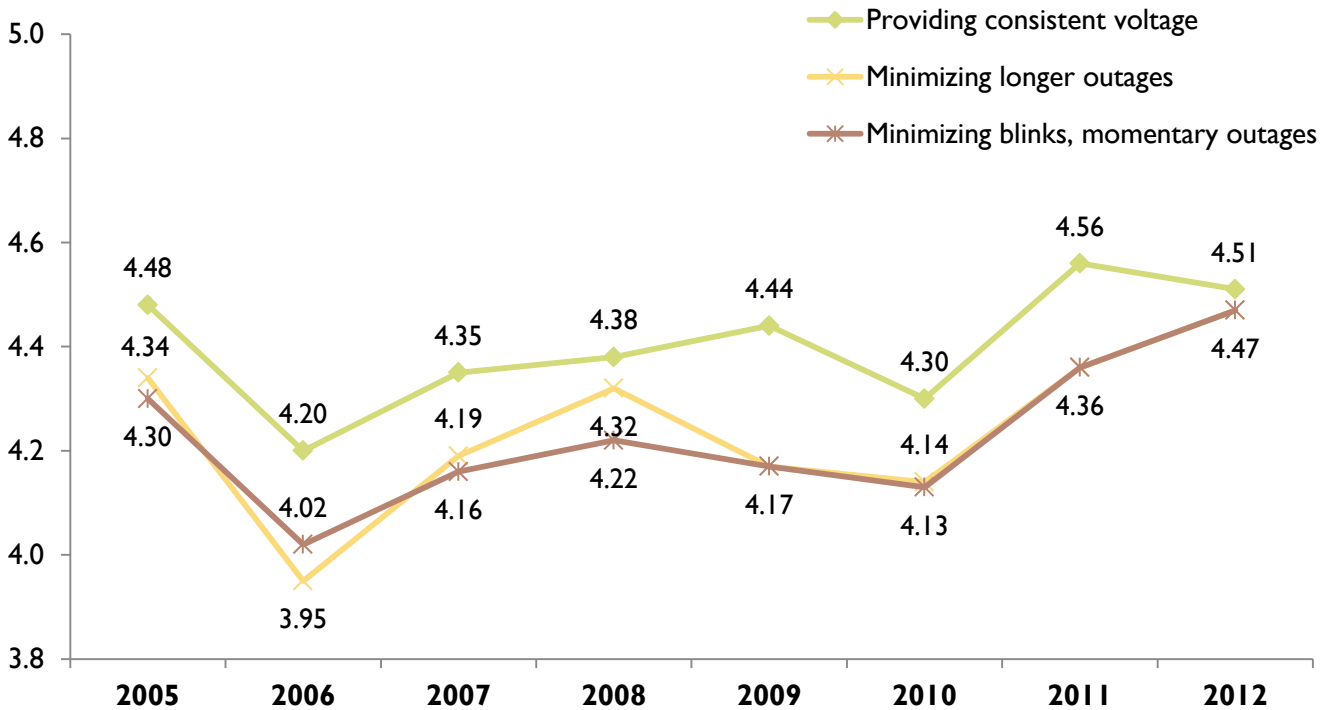




Nine in ten members give positive ratings for the three attributes that make up the Blinks and Longer Outages key driver. Additionally, mean ratings are approximately at or above the “excellent” threshold of 4.50 and higher than (*keeping blinks and momentary outages to a minimum*) or consistent with the Co-op Norms.

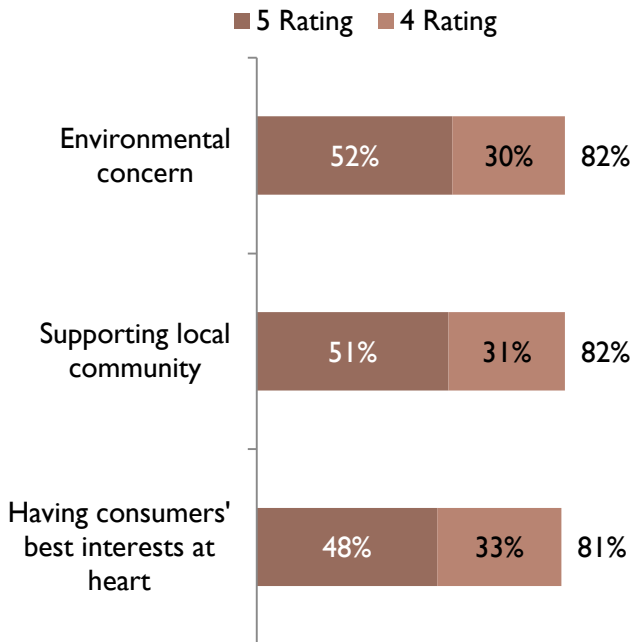
It is apparent that VEC has made improvements in this area; all three mean ratings are significantly higher than in 2010 and both *keeping blinks and momentary outages to a minimum* and *keeping the number of longer outages to a minimum* have improved from 2011.

Mean Trending

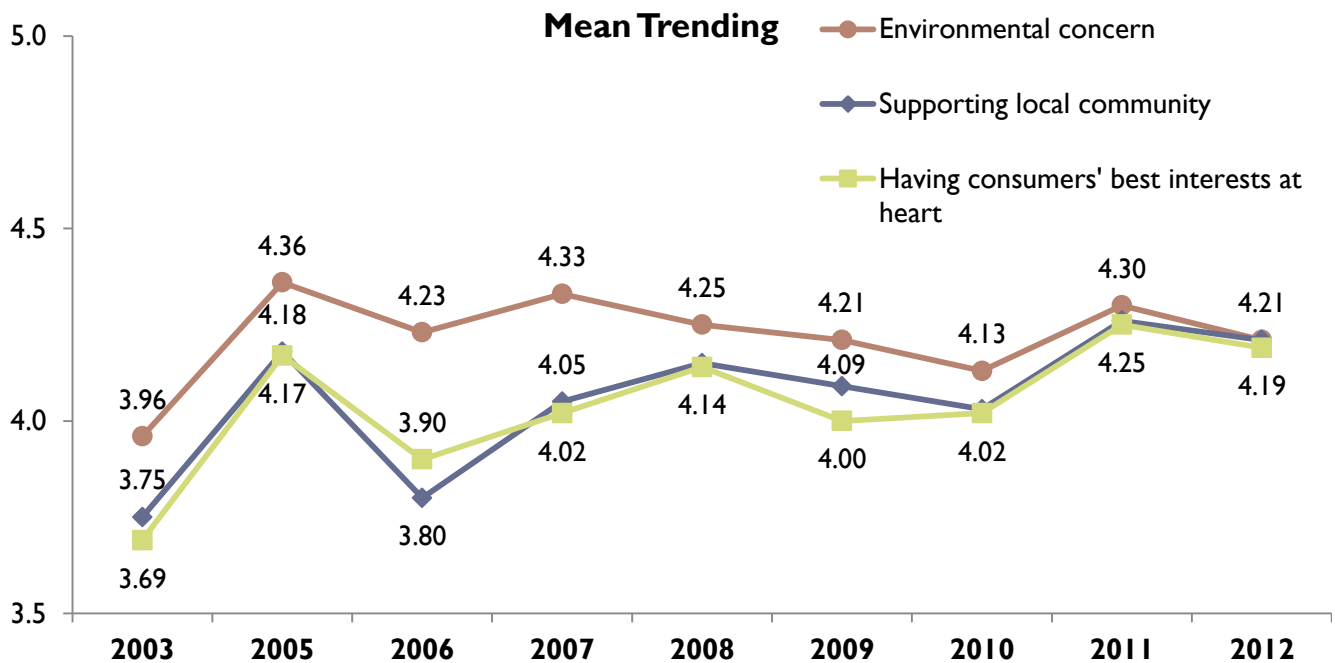


Social Responsibility

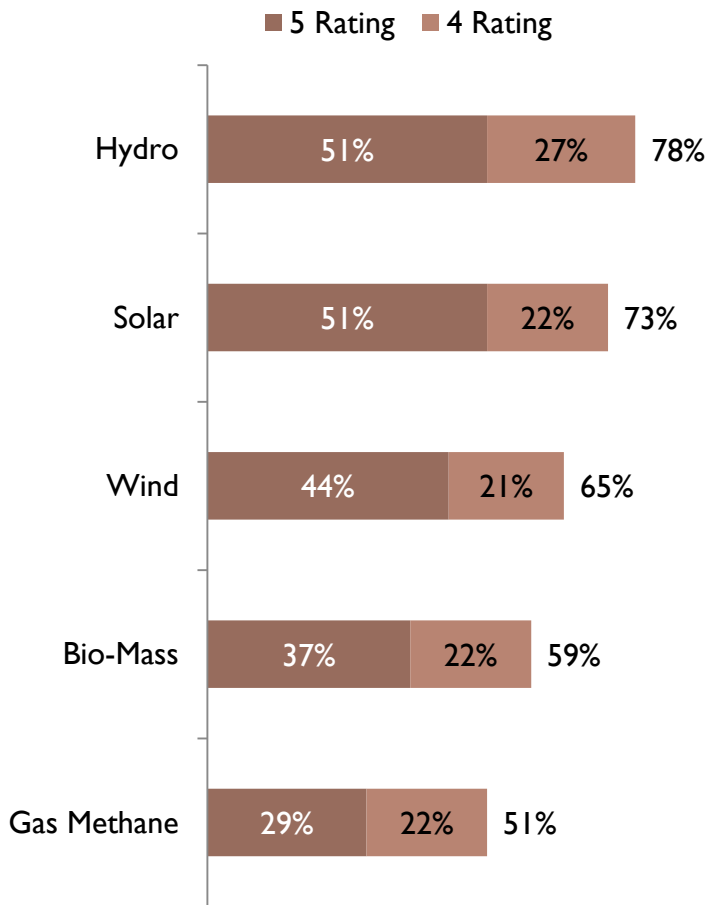
Social Responsibility is also a key driver of overall satisfaction. This is another area where members generally evaluate VEC positively. Although members still place a high importance on renewable energy, the perceived importance of wind power has decreased as has members' willingness to pay more for it.



Just over eight in ten give positive ratings for the co-op *operating with concern for the environment, supporting the local community, and having consumers' best interests at heart*. While mean ratings for all three attributes exceed the "good" threshold of 4.00 and *having consumers' best interests at heart* has improved significantly since 2010, all three are rated lower than the Co-op Norms.



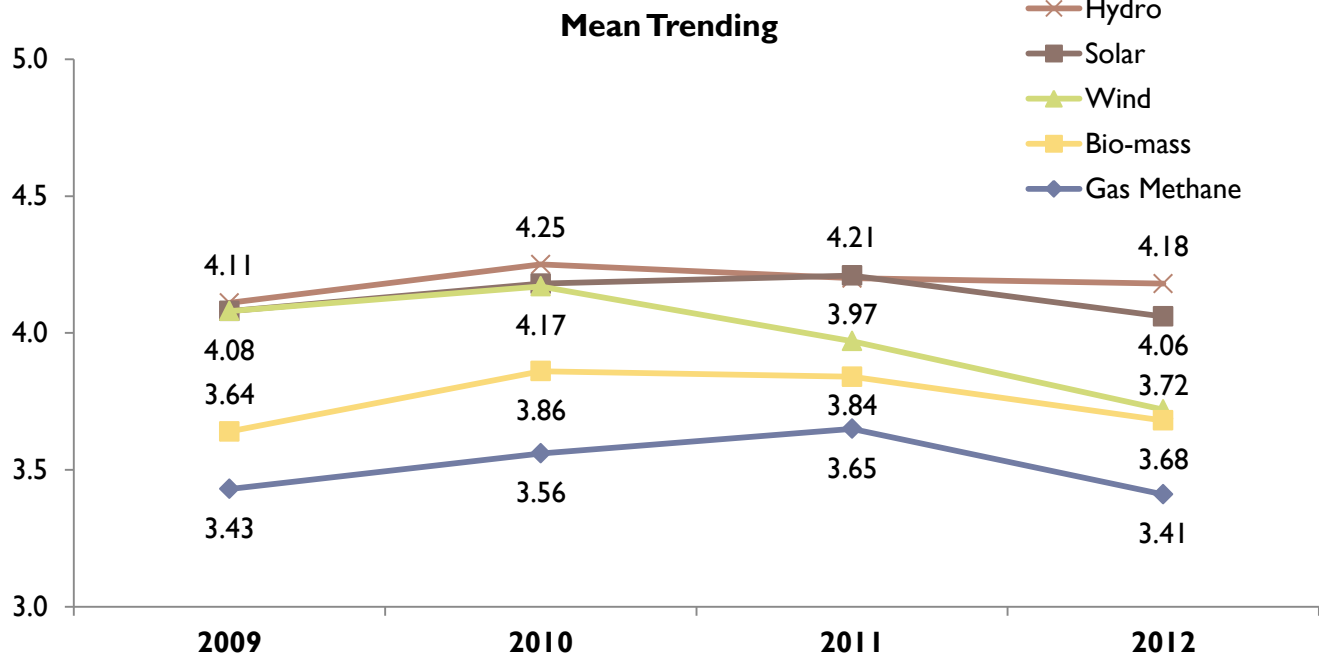
Importance of Using Green Power



Approximately three-quarters of the members feel that it is important for VEC to provide environmentally friendly power from hydro and solar sources. Just half think it's important to get power from gas methane sources.

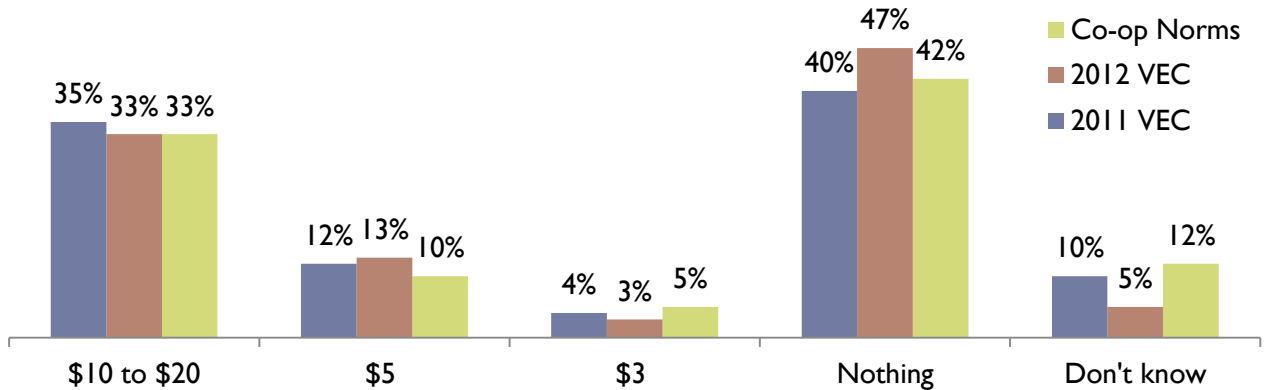
The perceived importance of VEC providing power from wind and gas methane has decreased significantly since 2011.

Members who are more satisfied overall with VEC place a significantly higher importance on each renewable energy source than do those who are less satisfied.



Compared to the all of the previous studies since 2005, members in 2012 are significantly less willing to pay extra to receive green power. Willingness to pay extra peaked in 2007 at 60%, and is now down to 48%. Not surprisingly, those paying higher electric bills and less affluent members are less willing to pay extra.

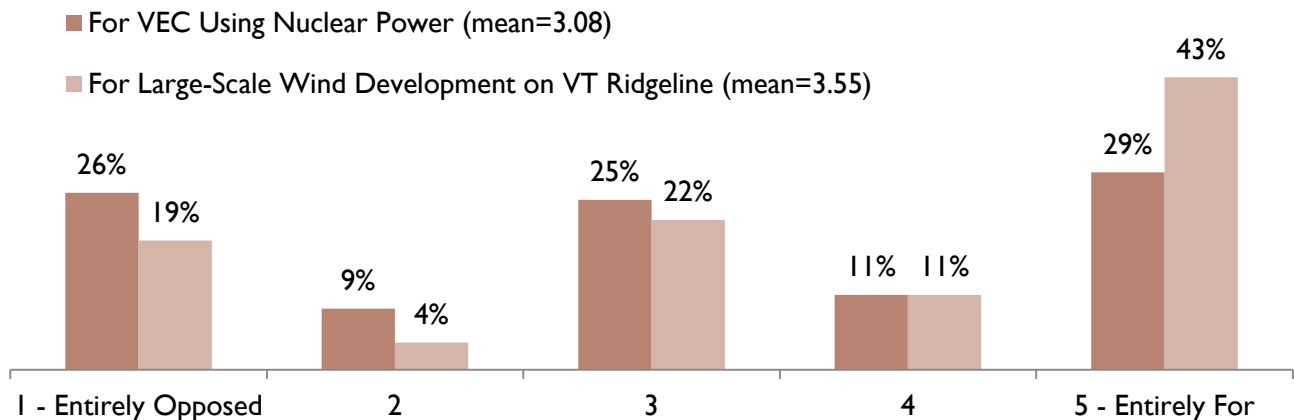
How Much More Willing to Pay Each Month to Get Green Power



Four in ten indicate they support Vermont Electric distributing electricity generated in part by nuclear power, giving a rating of “4” or “5 – entirely for”. This does not differ significantly from the 2010 and 2011 surveys, although members in 2012 are significantly less likely than those in 2011 to say they are entirely against distributing electricity generated from nuclear power (26% vs. 34%). Newer members, retired members, and males give significantly higher ratings than their individual counterparts for their support of VEC distributing electricity generated by nuclear power.

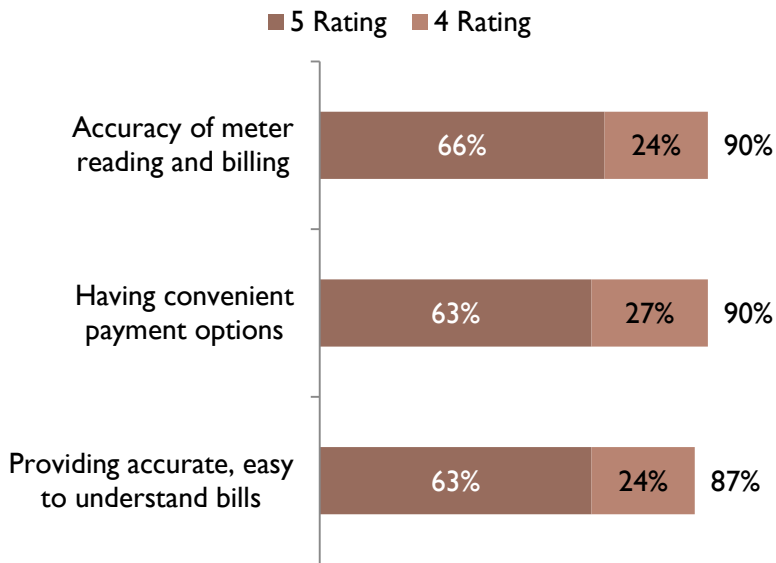
Just over half are in favor of large-scale wind development on Vermont’s ridgeline (rating of 4 or 5), while 23% are opposed to it (1 or 2). Members who are currently employed and females are significantly more likely to support this type of wind development than are retired members or males.

Level of Support



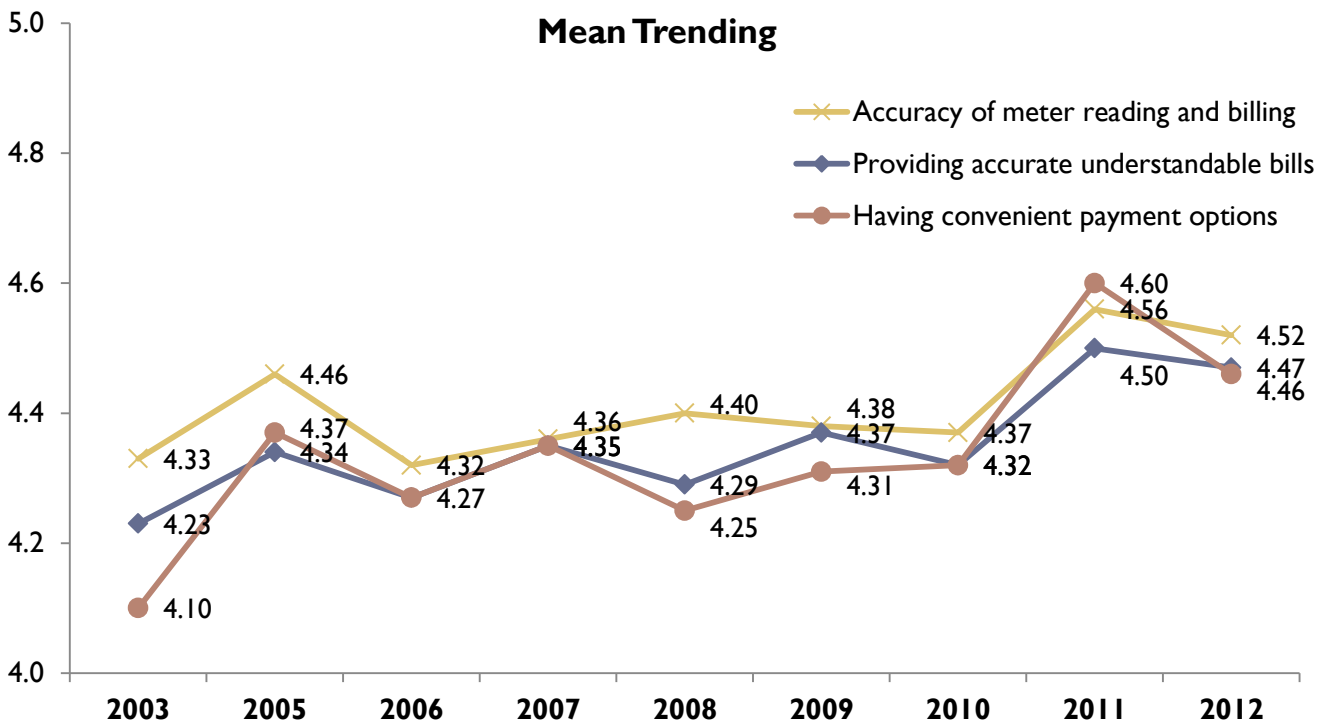
Bills and Payment Options

Providing accurate and easy to understand bills, having convenient payment options and the accuracy of meter reading and billing are not key drivers of overall satisfaction, but are certainly important to members and an area where ratings are very high and have improved from past surveys.



All three attributes have improved over most of the studies conducted prior to 2011.

Although the mean rating for *providing accurate and easy to understand bills* has declined significantly from 2011, it is near the excellent level and much higher than the 2009 and earlier studies.

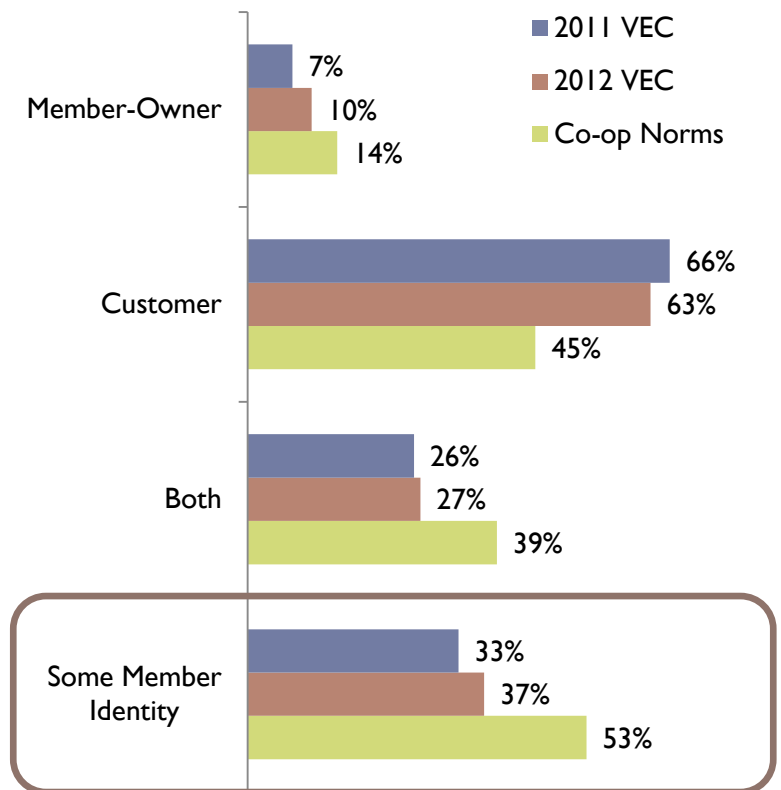


Member Identity

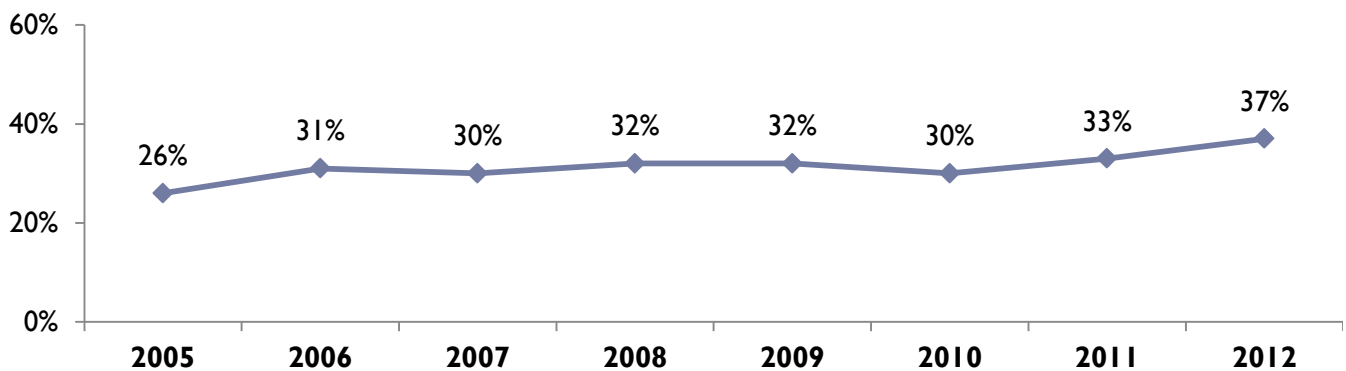
Thirty-seven percent have member identity, saying they view themselves as a member-owner or both a member-owner and a customer of the cooperative, as opposed to being a customer only. This is significantly higher than in 2005 but is lower than the Co-op Norms.

Those with member identity are significantly more satisfied with VEC and give significantly more positive evaluations than those who view themselves as “customers” on all of the performance attributes. In addition, “members” place higher importance on providing green power from a variety of renewable energy sources (with the differences being significant for hydro, gas methane, and bio-mass), are significantly more willing to pay extra to get green power, are significantly more likely to read the co-op newsletter. They are also significantly less likely to feel their rates are higher than at other electric companies.

Member Identity



Total Member Identity



Member Demographics and Segmentation

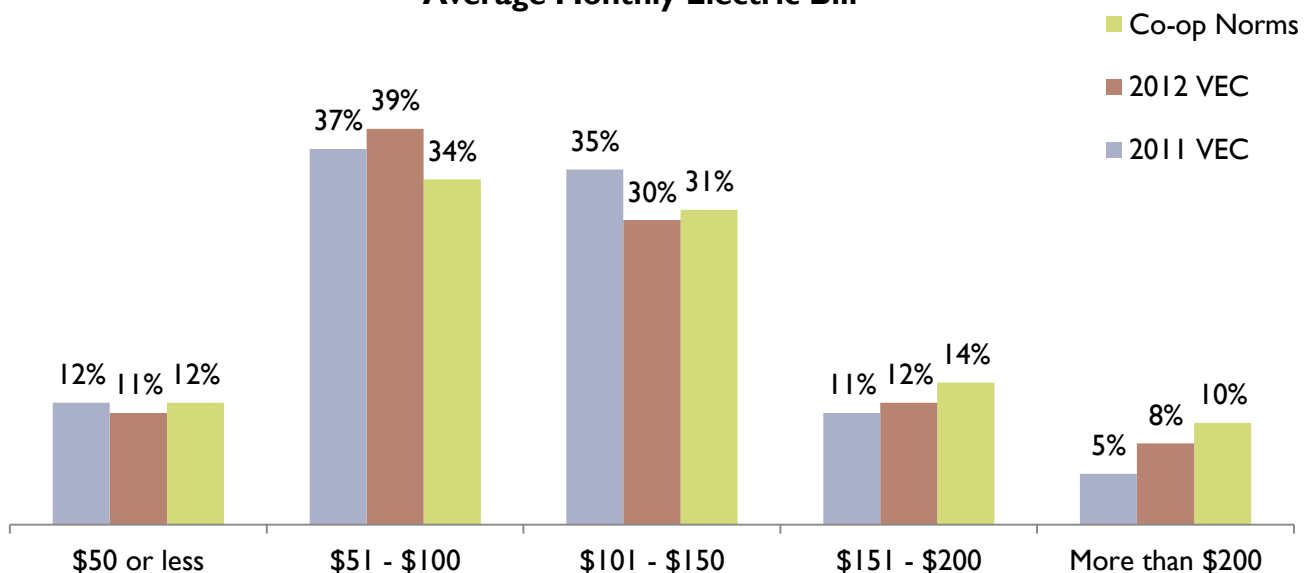
Two-thirds of the responding members live alone or with one other person, 50% have annual household incomes greater than \$50,000, and 40% have been served by Vermont Electric Cooperative for 20 years or more.

Member demographics in 2012 are very similar to those in recent surveys. Compared to the Co-op Norms, VEC members are more likely to be currently employed.

	2012	2011	2010	2009	Co-op Norms
Work full/part-time	54%	56%	60%	61%	46%
Household of 1 or 2	66%	68%	61%	63%	69%
Income Over \$50K	50%	45%	49%	45%	47%
Served 20 Yrs or More	40%	37%	37%	39%	37%

One-fifth of the VEC members indicate paying an average electric bill above \$150. This is also consistent with recent studies.

Average Monthly Electric Bill



Member segments that give significantly higher ratings than their counterparts for their overall satisfaction include those paying lower monthly electric bills, those living alone or with one other person, and retired members.

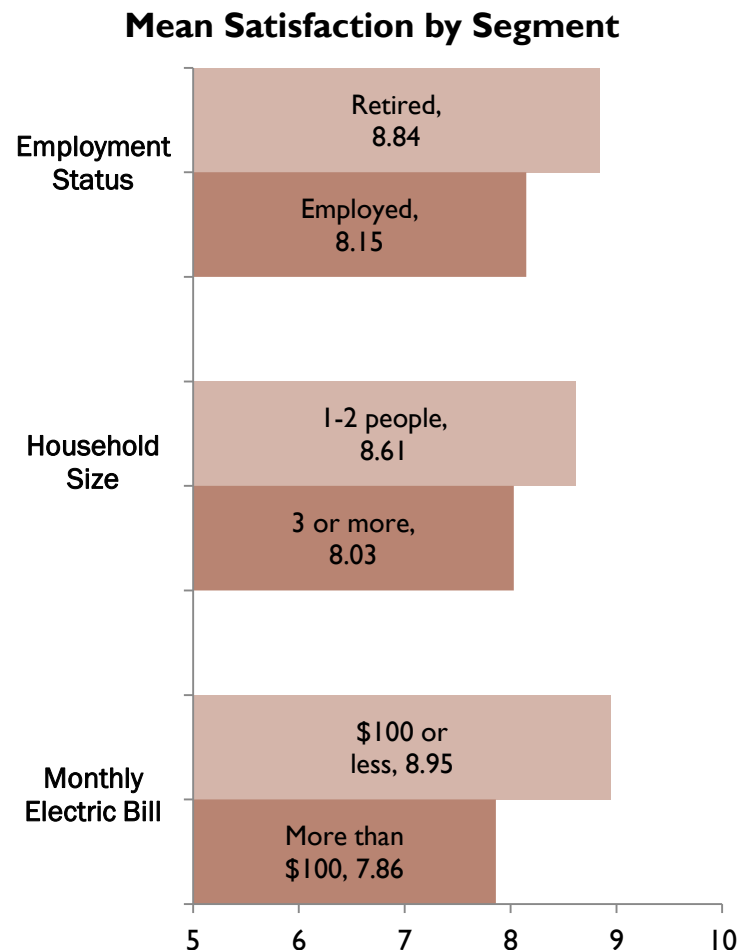
Those paying lower electric bills and retired members also evaluate VEC more positively on the various service attributes than do their counterparts. However, not all of the differences are statistically significant.

Retired members are also significantly more likely to read the newsletter and to prefer the newsletter for co-op information as well as critical information. They are also more likely to support VEC distributing electricity generated in part by nuclear power.

Although retired members are significantly more likely to feel like a member/owner of the cooperative, overall member identity (respondents feel they are a member or both a member and a customer) does not differ significantly.

Conversely, retired members are significantly less likely to support large-scale wind development, have contacted VEC in the past year, and have Internet access.

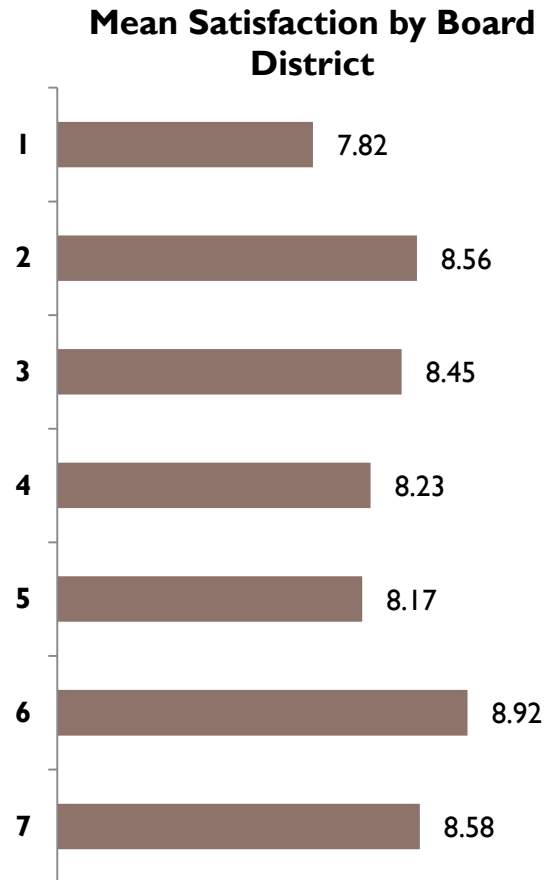
Those who are employed either full- or part-time are significantly more likely to prefer receiving information from the co-op via website, e-mail, and/or social media.



Members in Board District 6 are most satisfied overall, significantly more satisfied than those in Districts 1 and 5. They also tend to give higher ratings on the performance attributes, although few of the differences are statistically significant.

Significant differences in attribute ratings include:

- Charging reasonable rates (District 4 > District 5)
- The monthly service fees (District 6 > District 3)
- Delivering good value for the money (Districts 4, 6 > District 7; District 6 > District 5)
- Having highly-trained, professional employees (District 6 > Districts 1, 5)
- The speed and efficiency of responding to customers (Districts 6, 7 > Districts 1, 5)
- The restoration of power after an outage (Districts 2, 3, 6, 7 > District 4; Districts 3, 7 > District 5)
- The reliability of service and frequency of interruptions (Districts 2, 3, 6, 7 > District 5)
- Operating with concern for the environment (District 6 > Districts 2, 5, 7)
- Supporting the local community (Districts 6, 7 > Districts 1, 2, 3)
- Providing consistent voltage without surges or brownouts (Districts 2, 3, 6, 7 > District 5; Districts 2, 3, 6 > District 1; Districts 3, 6 > District 4)
- Keeping blinks and momentary outages to a minimum (Districts 1,2,3,6,7 > District 5; District 2 > Districts 1, 4)
- Keeping the number of longer outages to a minimum (District 2 > Districts 1, 4; Districts 2, 3 > District 5)
- Having convenient payment options (Districts 1, 6 > District 2)



Other differences include (not all of the differences are statistically significant):

- Members in District 3 are most likely to feel they are a member of VEC, significantly more likely than those in Districts 1 and 4.
- Those in District 6 place higher importance on providing green power, but are no more likely than those in other Districts to be likely to be willing to pay extra for it. In fact, those in Districts 4 and 5 are most likely to be willing to pay \$20 more per month.
- Members in District 7 give the highest ratings for support of large-scale wind development and distributing electricity generated by nuclear power.
- Members in Districts 3 and 4 are most likely to have contacted the co-op in the past year, significantly higher than those in District 7. Those in District 3 also give the highest ratings for the contact they have had.
- Those in District 7 are most likely to feel their rates are higher than at other companies.
- Those in District 5 are the most likely to have Internet access at home and to have high-speed access.
- Members in District 1 are the most likely to prefer communication from the co-op via newspaper and least likely to prefer e-mail. Those in Districts 3, 4, and 5 are more likely to prefer e-mail and those in Districts 4 and 6 are most likely to prefer an automated phone message.
- Those in Districts 3 and 7 are most likely to “always” read the quarterly newsletter.

Verbatim Comments

At the conclusion of the survey, members were given the opportunity to share any comments, concerns, or questions they had. Fifty-seven percent of the respondents offered input.

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. A full listing of comments can be found in Appendix B.

Subject/Topic	Total # Comments	Positive	Negative	Neutral
<i>Rates/Fees</i>	65	5	53	7
<i>Operations/Engineering – blinks, outages, tree trimming, AMI/AMR</i>	64	41	21	2
<i>Overall Satisfaction</i>	52	52	0	0
<i>Renewable Energy</i>	49			
<i>Member Services/Marketing – resolving issues, customer service reps</i>	12	9	3	0
<i>Management/Board</i>	11	3	6	2
<i>Newsletter/Information</i>	10	1	3	6
<i>Other</i>	8	1	2	5
<i>Energy Efficiency</i>	6	0	2	4
<i>Problems With Bills</i>	6	0	3	3

Appendix A:

Key Driver/Factor Explanation

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 consumers unconsciously think about or group the many different performance attributes. Five factors were found and named Member Service, Cost, Blinks and Longer Outages, Reliability and Restoration, and Social Responsibility.

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 members' inquiries or problems
- Resolving any issues or problems
- The overall customer service they provide
- Having highly-trained, professional employees
- Having consumers' best interests at heart

Cost Factor

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

Blinks and Longer Outages Factor

- Providing consistent voltage without surges or brownouts
- Keeping blinks and momentary outages to a minimum
- Keeping the number of longer outages to a minimum

Reliability and Restoration Factor

- The restoration of power after an outage
- The reliability of service and frequency of interruptions
- Keeping the number of longer outages to a minimum

Social Responsibility Factor

- Operating with concern for the environment
- Supporting the local community
- 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:

- The accuracy of meter reading and billing
- The speed and efficiency of responding to customers
- Communicating with members and keeping them informed
- Keeping members informed on the status of outages
- Providing accurate and easy to understand bills
- 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.

Appendix B:

Verbatim Responses

VERMONT ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE VERBATIM RESPONSES**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

In order to present comments in their entirety, verbatim responses may appear under more than one heading. The portion of the comment pertaining to the section is in black, while portions covered under other areas are colored in gray.

Overall Satisfaction – Positive Responses

I think they do a good job. (5 mentions)

I am satisfied. (3 mentions)

I am satisfied with them. (2 mentions)

Everything is going okay.

I am from New Jersey, and I go to Vermont for my soul. Everything there is wonderful, including Vermont Electric. The employees there are exceptionally pleasant and helpful.

I am happy.

I am just thankful we got it, and that they are doing a good job.

I am quite pleased with Vermont Electric. At least I don't have the problems with them that I have with other companies I have to pay bills to.

I am very satisfied and always have been.

I am very satisfied and have no complaints.

I have lived in many different states and in many different locations, and I am happier with Vermont Electric than with any other company I have had. We have fewer outages here and the bills are lower.

I just feel they are a very good company.

I just have a summer camp there, but I must say we are interested in what Vermont Electric is doing. I must say I like the idea of a cooperative. They treat you like a member that is for sure. The service is good and the rates are equitable.

I think they're doing a fantastic job!

I think their services have improved dramatically over the past 10 years. Their prices are a little too high.

I think they are doing a pretty good job.

I think they are doing a real good job and I am very proud and glad to be associated with them. I called Vermont to check on you this morning and they said yes they were doing this, so I asked for your number and they said they could not give it, that you are an independent contractor that did surveys, so I was so hoping you would call back again tonight! Thanks for calling back! This is our secondary home and I just love Vermont Electric.

I think they are doing fine.

Additional Comments
Overall Satisfaction – Positive Responses
(continued)

I think they are doing okay so far.

I think they do a pretty good job.

I think they do a pretty good job. I think they need to clear the lines a little better. I have them two places and my one place needs to be done better.

I think they do a wonderful job.

I think they're doing quite well.

I think they've been really good to us. They have really good service.

I would certainly be willing to pay extra each month for renewable energy power, but only if I perceive that it is not just PR. I want to be convinced that it is a locally generated power such as methane from the farmers here. Also I am all for electricity from existing hydro dams, but I am opposed to constructing new dams. I really like the idea that Vermont Electric is a small local company as opposed to being associated with a mammoth company.

I'm good.

I'm happy I'm with a cooperative.

I'm very satisfied.

It is just fine.

No problems at all.

On the question with the length of the newsletter, if they are holding anything back because of size, then it is too short. But if they are putting everything in there, then it is just right. **The electric co-op does a good job.**

Overall, I am very satisfied. When they are here working on the lines, etc., they are very nice and helpful.

Pretty satisfied.

Tell them to keep up the good work they're doing.

They are doing all right.

They are doing fine the way it is now, or in other words, I am satisfied.

They are doing well.

They are serving us much better than they did in the old days. It would be nice if they could make it easier to pay our bills online. We should be able to do it electronically, or debit or credit card.

They have been doing a good job so far. I am definitely for solar or wind power.

They have improved a great deal.

Additional Comments**Overall Satisfaction – Positive Responses
(continued)**

We are very happy. I would like to see more renewable energy sources added and cheaper rates.

We have always been very satisfied. We do have some surges. Initially here we had Quebec Hydro, then it was Citizens, and now it is Vermont Electric.

We have never had any problems, so think things are okay. They do a good job.

We really like the co-op.

Well, they don't bother me like Comcast does, so I am happy. I have only had one outage and they fixed that right away, and the bill is not that high. I do have trouble understanding why one month the bill is much higher and next month the bill is much lower.

Management/Board – Positive Responses

At a previous company we had off-peak rates, but I don't think Vermont Electric has these. The off-peak rates certainly lowered our bill. I did contact them about selling back electricity from our wind turbine, but they said they could not give us a credit for that. They should do more in this area. My husband and I take the idea of a cooperative seriously. For example, we research for voting for Directors.

I own a beauty shop and I like the personal touch whenever possible. One of my customers is on the co-op Board at Vermont Electric and I positively know that if I had a question or a problem, that I could call him anytime night or day and that he would have it taken care of. Vermont Electric has very good service. It is 'Johnny on the spot' if you call in.

I think they have a good group, and we are well represented with our area representatives.

Management/Board – Negative Responses

A co-op that is owned by the members and that they are the second highest in the state. They must be paying the bosses way too much money.

I am not happy with the leadership of the co-op. They are not truthful. The service people are top notch, no complaints.

The average cost of my power is \$3 a day and I think that is reasonable. I am all for communication from Vermont Electric, but I don't want them to increase the rates in order to improve how they communicate. I am very involved in the community, and I really don't see much in the way of involvement by Vermont Electric. Maybe I am missing it.

There was an incident where Vermont Electric mixed up the electric bills for two neighbors. One of the customers had a very high bill and was always trying to figure out why the bill was so high. Finally Vermont Electric told the customer what happened. Initially Vermont Electric would only repay for one year but after the threat of a lawsuit paid the customer something like \$10,000. I was very disappointed that my electric company would only offer to pay for one year. What a way to make yourself look bad.

You know I am for using nuclear energy to produce electricity. It is just that Vermont Yankee has not been that honest.

Additional Comments

Management/Board – Negative Responses

(continued)

They need to work on their communication. Before they start on a project they need to let the members know what they are doing, and let us discuss and all vote on it. The wind project, before they started, we were not able to discuss it and had no say. Our opinions did not count. I know my opinion is just an opinion, but it seemed like our opinions were not considered, and they voted without full representation.

Management/Board – Neutral Responses

I am ambivalent about the wind turbines. I have visited a wind turbine project and like the idea of generating electricity that way, but I know I don't want one in my backyard. I especially like the tidbits of information in the newsletter about saving on electricity. I am just a weekend person, but I try to gather the information so I can vote in the elections nonetheless.

When I have the opportunity to vote I really don't know a lot about the people so it makes it difficult to vote. I don't feel like I'm qualified because I am not a native Vermonthian.

Operations/Engineering – Positive Responses

I am not happy with the leadership of the co-op. They are not truthful. The service people are top notch, no complaints.

I have lived in many different states and in many different locations, and I am happier with Vermont Electric than with any other company I have had. We have fewer outages here and the bills are lower.

I just have a summer camp there, but I must say we are interested in what Vermont Electric is doing. I must say I like the idea of a cooperative. They treat you like a member that is for sure. The service is good and the rates are equitable.

I think they've been really good to us. They have really good service.

Overall, I am very satisfied. When they are here working on the lines, etc., they are very nice and helpful.

Well, they don't bother me like Comcast does, so I am happy. I have only had one outage and they fixed that right away, and the bill is not that high. I do have trouble understanding why one month the bill is much higher and next month the bill is much lower.

It is always very good service.

As long as they keep the lines going I do not complain. As far as I can see they do a good job.

For such a rural area, I think Vermont Electric does a great job. They have a lot to contend with in regard to the woods.

I am pretty satisfied, actually, with their service.

I am really happy with them now. A couple of years ago they replaced the old line by my home, and I haven't had one outage or any blinking lights since then.

I am very happy with the service they provide! It's the best.

Additional Comments Operations/Engineering – Positive Responses (continued)

I am very happy with them. When we first moved here we had a lot of outages, but they really improved that. I just sent them an e-mail today stating that.

I am very pleased with them. Whenever I have an outage, I call in and see how they are doing. I always tell them to be careful, because I know how dangerous their job is. They lost two employees in the past year. I would not want their job.

I am very satisfied with their service. My only problem is their rates. Their rates are double the rates of the three counties surrounding us.

I am very satisfied with Vermont Electric. We almost always have current. In fact we had just one outage in the last year. If the power is going to be out, they let us know ahead of time.

I had one request. I needed them to check out some trees that were marginal. They came within a few days and took care of the issue. I received very good service.

I have power so I am basically happy with them. I am also happy with them because they are trying to get electricity from alternative sources.

I think they do a great job getting the power back on, considering those of us who live on the hill.

I think they have made huge gains, concerning the trimming of trees, and limiting the power outages and severity, and the number of them have been drastically reduced. Their customer service is courteous and very good service. Bart Bacon is an exceptional engineer.

I think they serve you pretty well. I did not know how it would be after Citizen's went out of here. VEC has lived up to it.

I'm pretty happy with their service.

In Vermont, we are supposed to enjoy the beauty of the hillsides, not look at ugly wind towers. Vermont Electric is good with outages. They just need to stabilize the rates and keep the bills from always going up.

It is much improved since the 1980's. We used to be out for two weeks in the winter.

My biggest issue is the rates being so high. I think service is great. With today's economy, it's hard to pay the bill.

Not this year. I have no comments because this year they have done a better job of trimming the trees. In the past not so good, but now good.

The cutting back the branches from the lines has been very helpful.

Their service is good. The employees are pleasant and never rude. They are quick about restoring the power after outages. My only complaint is the amount of fees they tack on the bill. These fees are around \$20 a month which is outrageous.

They do fine with me now, after they switched my line feed. It has been much more reliable.

They do service well, but the neighbors across the lake have better rates than we do. They are in New York. A lot of people are moving over there because of the lower electric rates.

They have been very helpful in a couple of instances and we are very happy with them.

Additional Comments

Operations/Engineering – Positive Responses

(continued)

They have improved from like four years ago on the outages.

This is for our camp in Vermont. I actually live in Quebec. Although I favor hydroelectric dams for electricity, Vermont Electric gets its power from dams in Quebec which I am not in favor of. I have always been pleased with their service. About five years ago, a wire broke at our camp, and within two hours, Vermont Electric had fixed the wire, and this is a fairly isolated area. You would not get this kind of service in Quebec.

I am very pleased with the service.

We have excellent service. In fact, they were out today to put in a new electric box. They repaired it last week and said the repair would not last, and it didn't. They came out immediately when I called.

We really have very few outages, and if we do, we have a generator backup. Our only problem is that the bill is so high. Sometimes it is up to \$250 a month.

When we were first married, there used to be a lot of outages and they don't have them anymore. I'm happy with it.

Wind tower projects on the ridgelines would necessitate the building of access roads to the ridgelines and I think that might hurt hunting, which I am a big advocate of. Vermont Electric has done a good job in recent years of clearing the trees from the lines and so now we don't have so many outages.

Just keep the lights on. The reliability is getting better, but has been very bad in the past. We are having problems with our computers because of the meters.

They give great service. Summer rates and winter rates vary so much. I would like it to even out. The only thing is in the winter with the ice storms, when we go down we are down for way too long.

We hardly have any outages now that they cut the trees. My biggest complaint about Vermont Electric was when we built our house eight years ago. It took them eight months to get the power set up for our house, and we had to use a generator. The paperwork for that was ridiculous. You know when we moved here from Connecticut, we thought the power would be less, because everyone knows that Connecticut is an expensive state. Actually the power costs are about the same. Why don't they just have a flat rate and get rid of the service fees? I find service fees insulting.

Operations/Engineering – Negative Responses

I think they do a pretty good job. I think they need to clear the lines a little better. I have them two places and my one place needs to be done better.

We have always been very satisfied. We do have some surges. Initially here we had Quebec Hydro, then it was Citizens, and now it is Vermont Electric.

I am still upset about a three-day outage I had last summer. I kept calling and leaving messages and they never returned my messages. We never did know when the power would be restored. Also the rates and my bills are just too high, over \$200 a month. We are just not happy with Vermont Electric.

I have been in utilities for 21 years, working for them as a lineman, not with VEC. The most important thing for me with the co-op is to get your power line out to the road, roadside. In doing that, the reliability increases immensely because the buckets can get to the poles a lot easier and the roadside is a lot safer. VEC has way too many power lines cross country.

Additional Comments Operations/Engineering – Negative Responses (continued)

You have to get out of your vehicle, and there are a lot of ways for accidents, and I know from working on lines. We tried so much on this to get the lines out of the roads, that is why I rated the reliability so low. If it were roadside, buckets could be used.

I really don't pay a lot of attention to Vermont Electric. We do have a lot of outages and sometimes they last for quite a while, like over a day. The other complaint I have is that they left a real mess the last time they trimmed the trees here. They just left the trimmings and the logs the way they fell. I am older, and I had to have my neighbor clean it up.

I think the reliability is the issue, uninterrupted service and less power surges.

I was very disappointed to hear they were going to use pesticides instead of cutting trees. We use an alternative source for electricity, solar. So I am not always aware of outages and interruptions.

I would like that they can provide power without so many surges or blinks, as that disrupts our electronics. Concerning the cutting of trees, they butchered our trees, that weren't leaning.

My lights go out way too often here. If they don't do something about this I'm going to have to buy a generator!

Our only issue is that our lines or grid goes through the under hill artillery area. It is a government program, so they can't do tree trimming. They only go in there if there is an outage, so it takes longer for them to fix ours.

Please have them call me about getting my tree trimming done. I called in three months ago asking them to take care of the situation and they haven't even called me back. It's been three months and the limbs are over the line.

Recently they cut a bunch of trees and limbs down on my property and it took me four weeks to clean it up. I think they should clean it up themselves or have a form that lets them know if it's okay to just leave it. They need to clean it up themselves. It's bad for the animals, etc. It was very hard on me to clean all that up.

Since I moved into my house my electric bill has tripled and I have outages every day and I have complained and complained and it never gets fixed. I am so frustrated!

They need to have an operative closer than an hour away to tend to our outages. I know they did trim the lines that will help. But we are out a minimum of 2 hours, and if the transformer is out it takes 4 hours. There used to be a utility truck up here, but not anymore and I don't know why. We now need quicker service. They just need to do their job.

We need to figure out something about how they can keep the lights on a little better. They go out constantly and they need to do something to remedy this problem. We had to go and buy a generator so we don't have to be without heat in the winter and air in the summer!

We've had a couple of power outages, but we don't hear why or where or what the resolution was supposed to be.

When they did the vegetation work on the power lines, they used a defoliate they said was safe, but we were still concerned about our well water.

Why is my kilowatt usage rising all the time?

Just keep the lights on. The reliability is getting better, but has been very bad in the past. We are having problems with our computers because of the meters.

Additional Comments

Operations/Engineering – Negative Responses

(continued)

They give great service. Summer rates and winter rates vary so much. I would like it to even out. The only thing is in the winter with the ice storms, when we go down we are down for way too long.

We hardly have any outages now that they cut the trees. My biggest complaint about Vermont Electric was when we built our house eight years ago. It took them eight months to get the power set up for our house, and we had to use a generator. The paperwork for that was ridiculous. You know when we moved here from Connecticut, we thought the power would be less, because everyone knows that Connecticut is an expensive state. Actually the power costs are about the same. Why don't they just have a flat rate and get rid of the service fees? I find service fees insulting.

Operations/Engineering – Neutral Responses

I am just there on weekends. If the power goes off, I lose my phone service too. Usually, everything is fine.

My biggest concern when we have an outage is that they get it restored as quickly as possible. I have fish tanks and I'm concerned about them. Also, we don't have any water when the power is off, so I'm definitely anxious for the power to be restored. I also want to talk to a real person when I call in. I don't like calling in and getting a computer.

I was very disappointed to hear they were going to use pesticides instead of cutting trees. We use an alternative source for electricity, solar. So I am not always aware of outages and interruptions.

Member Services/Marketing/Communications – Positive Responses

I am very satisfied with Vermont Electric. We almost always have current. In fact we had just one outage in the last year. If the power is going to be out, they let us know ahead of time.

I think they have made huge gains, concerning the trimming of trees, and limiting the power outages and severity, and the number of them have been drastically reduced. Their customer service is courteous and very good service. Bart Bacon is an exceptional engineer.

Their service is good. The employees are pleasant and never rude. They are quick about restoring the power after outages. My only complaint is the amount of fees they tack on the bill. These fees are around \$20 a month which is outrageous.

I own a beauty shop and I like the personal touch whenever possible. One of my customers is on the co-op Board at Vermont Electric and I positively know that if I had a question or a problem, that I could call him anytime night or day and that he would have it taken care of. Vermont Electric has very good service. It is 'Johnny on the spot' if you call in.

I am from New Jersey, and I go to Vermont for my soul. Everything there is wonderful, including Vermont Electric. The employees there are exceptionally pleasant and helpful.

I like how easy they are to deal with. The prices are hard to swallow every month.

I like the reps for each town and the experience they have.

I think they are doing their best at keeping the rates as low as possible. They are very nice people.

When I call, the customer service reps are very complacent and helpful.

Additional Comments Member Services/Marketing/Communications (continued)

Member Services/Marketing/Communications – Negative Responses

My biggest concern when we have an outage is that they get it restored as quickly as possible. I have fish tanks and I'm concerned about them. Also, we don't have any water when the power is off, so I'm definitely anxious for the power to be restored. I also want to talk to a real person when I call in. I don't like calling in and getting a computer.

I have had problems with their customer service people having pretty bad attitudes.

I think that they need to be more responsive when customers call about something. Be reasonable about budget plans, because of the way the economy is.

Billing/Finance – Negative Responses

Well, they don't bother me like Comcast does, so I am happy. I have only had one outage and they fixed that right away, and the bill is not that high. I do have trouble understanding why one month the bill is much higher and next month the bill is much lower.

They do allow us to drop our bills off in drop boxes, but they should make sure drop boxes are in businesses with extended hours. In the Newport area, the drop box is now in a bank which doesn't even open until 9:00. Many people go to work before 9:00 and can't drop off their bill.

Within a few days that we get our bill, they send us a disconnect notice. The rates are very outrageous.

Billing/Finance – Neutral Response

They are serving us much better than they did in the old days. It would be nice if they could make it easier to pay our bills online. We should be able to do it electronically, or debit or credit card.

If I could use a debit card as opposed to a checking account, I would do that.

I think that they need to be more responsive when customers call about something. Be reasonable about budget plans, because of the way the economy is.

Rates/Fees – Positive Responses

Well, they don't bother me like Comcast does, so I am happy. I have only had one outage and they fixed that right away, and the bill is not that high. I do have trouble understanding why one month the bill is much higher and next month the bill is much lower.

I think they are doing their best at keeping the rates as low as possible. They are very nice people.

I have lived in many different states and in many different locations, and I am happier with Vermont Electric than with any other company I have had. We have fewer outages here and the bills are lower.

Additional Comments

Rates/Fees – Positive Responses (continued)

I just have a summer camp there, but I must say we are interested in what Vermont Electric is doing. I must say I like the idea of a cooperative. They treat you like a member that is for sure. The service is good and the rates are equitable.

The average cost of my power is \$3 a day and I think that is reasonable. I am all for communication from Vermont Electric, but I don't want them to increase the rates in order to improve how they communicate. I am very involved in the community, and I really don't see much in the way of involvement by Vermont Electric. Maybe I am missing it.

Rates/Fees – Negative Responses

Lower my bill. (2 mentions)

Within a few days that we get our bill, they send us a disconnect notice. The rates are very outrageous.

Their service is good. The employees are pleasant and never rude. They are quick about restoring the power after outages. My only complaint is the amount of fees they tack on the bill. These fees are around \$20 a month which is outrageous.

I like how easy they are to deal with. The prices are hard to swallow every month.

I am very satisfied with their service. My only problem is their rates. Their rates are double the rates of the three counties surrounding us.

My biggest issue is the rates being so high. I think service is great. With today's economy, it's hard to pay the bill.

They do service well, but the neighbors across the lake have better rates than we do. They are in New York. A lot of people are moving over there because of the lower electric rates.

We really have very few outages, and if we do, we have a generator backup. Our only problem is that the bill is so high. Sometimes it is up to \$250 a month.

I am still upset about a three-day outage I had last summer. I kept calling and leaving messages and they never returned my messages. We never did know when the power would be restored. Also the rates and my bills are just too high, over \$200 a month. We are just not happy with Vermont Electric.

Since I moved into my house my electric bill has tripled and I have outages every day and I have complained and complained and it never gets fixed. I am so frustrated!

We hardly have any outages now that they cut the trees. My biggest complaint about Vermont Electric was when we built our house eight years ago. It took them eight months to get the power set up for our house, and we had to use a generator. The paperwork for that was ridiculous. You know when we moved here from Connecticut, we thought the power would be less, because everyone knows that Connecticut is an expensive state. Actually the power costs are about the same. Why don't they just have a flat rate and get rid of the service fees? I find service fees insulting.

A co-op that is owned by the members and that they are the second highest in the state. They must be paying the bosses way too much money.

I think their services have improved dramatically over the past 10 years. Their prices are a little too high.

Additional Comments

Rates/Fees – Negative Responses (continued)

We are very happy. I would like to see more renewable energy sources added and cheaper rates.

Be better about the rates for those who have solar panels. Don't charge those extra fees. Be competitive with Mountain Power.

Everybody objects to the prices.

I am concerned with the rates.

I am opposed to spending any more for renewable energy for electricity. One renewable energy source not mentioned is wood. Here in Vermont I consider wood to be a renewable energy source, and I think other people should consider it as well. I was surprised when we came here that the power was so high. We came from Con Edison which has supposedly the highest rates in the United States, but we found that Vermont Electric is just as expensive.

I do have concerns about being charged \$20+ dollars a month when I haven't used any electricity.

I don't know how much Vermont Electric really had to do with it originally, but when we built a new home seven years ago, there was a new street light put in, and I have been paying \$14 a month to Vermont Electric ever since for it. That is a long time to pay for a light that I don't think we should have had to pay for to begin with. Other than that I have had no problems with Vermont Electric.

I don't like the extra charges on my account. I've started looking at the bill when I heard reports of what was happening on the radio. I don't like the charge for the automatic meter reading. I didn't vote or approve them putting in the new meters and having that extra cost. I don't mind paying for the electricity I use, but I don't like having an extra \$30 added to my billing.

I have done everything to keep the electric bill down. I pull the plugs on everything, even my washer and dryer. With all of that, my bill is still over \$100 a month. Also my friends in Burlington are not being slammed nearly as much as I am for their bills.

I have electric bills from five different residences and the rates from Vermont Electric are higher than any of the other companies I deal with. Anything they could do to make the power cost less, including using more renewable energy, would be great.

I just want them to stay away from nuclear power for generating electricity. That is never safe. I am on a fixed income and live alone, and my bill now averages \$137 a month. When I was with Citizen's it was \$56 every two months, so you can see how much electricity has gone up.

I like that they are exploring alternative energy for generating electricity. Also, I would like the rates to come down and be more competitive with some of the other companies in the area.

I think the rates should be lower and I don't think we should buy energy from Canada. Create more American jobs. Build nuclear plants.

I think their rates are ridiculous. I think they need to find a way to lower their rates. I've been talking to others about getting our own source of power. The state of Vermont has grants for it.

I think to pay a fee all year for a non-resident is too much to ask in this economy. There is also a surcharge when we are there in the summer. We're already taxed for having the property. It costs more to turn it off and put it back on. I don't like the monthly service fees.

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

I wish I could find out why my light bill jumped \$40 in one month, and then went down to the regular amount. I would not like that to happen again. I don't use much electricity for myself.

I wish my rates would be lower. I wish they could check out to see why it is so high.

I would like to see less expensive power for local business. I think we spend a lot on green energy, but Vermont can't afford it.

I'm going to call them and demand that they come and take my meter out and see what's wrong with it. My goodness, my brother lives on a farm next door to me and my bill is bigger than his. Something has to be wrong.

Just lower the price. Don't up the rates January through March.

Just to give us, the customers, a communication or a sense that they are actually working to keep down the rates... or they could actually lower them. I don't see them doing anything to control the rates. I would choose to have them communicate with me by e-mail, but I don't want to give out my e-mail address right now over the phone.

Keep prices down.

Lower the rates for the cooperative customers.

Lower the rate is the obvious answer.

Lower the rates like they have been promising the last 20-30 years.

Lower the rates. It would be nice if they sent out a sheet about what different electrical appliances use so the homeowners can make better choices.

Lower their rates.

My bills are so high! They are usually well over \$200. Is there any way they could come out and do an audit to find out why my bills are so high? We just can't afford it!

My only comment is the comment I have about most things anymore: figure out a way to lower the rates or the cost.

Their prices are high. No contact unless you will bring the prices down.

Their rates are higher than those in the area. They might be the most expensive in Vermont. I would like them to fix it.

There is no competition of course, and we can't go anyplace else. Our bill averages over \$200 a month and we can't do much about it. The most important comment is that they should provide as much electricity as possible for the least amount of cost to the customers. I am not for or against electricity from renewable energy. I am only interested in the rates.

They need to lower the prices of the kilowatt hour.

This is just for service at my camp. I have to pay \$16 a month in the winter, and I tried to get the power shut off for the winter, but I found out that that would cost more than just paying the \$16. I am on a fixed income so every dollar makes a difference. I actually like the use of wind energy for electricity, but then I might change my mind if I had to have those wind towers very close to my home.

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

It is too expensive. Get nuclear power back

Try to keep the yearly increase down. It is higher than the national average.

We are just here in the summer. It is country here, compared to where we live in Montreal. But still it is very expensive power here compared to Montreal. I am only interested in getting power, and I don't care about Vermont Electric's newsletter or anything else about the company.

We could take a drop in the bill, but otherwise everything is rather good. My sister is a mile away and gets her power from Green Mountain Electric, and her bill is half of what mine is. I don't think that a cooperative is beneficial at all. The rates are just too high and they are not listening to us about the rates.

I would like the rates to be lower.

Rates/Fees – Neutral Responses

In Vermont, we are supposed to enjoy the beauty of the hillsides, not look at ugly wind towers. Vermont Electric is good with outages. They just need to stabilize the rates and keep the bills from always going up.

They give great service. Summer rates and winter rates vary so much. I would like it to even out. The only thing is in the winter with the ice storms, when we go down we are down for way too long.

At a previous company we had off-peak rates, but I don't think Vermont Electric has these. The off-peak rates certainly lowered our bill. I did contact them about selling back electricity from our wind turbine, but they said they could not give us a credit for that. They should do more in this area. My husband and I take the idea of a cooperative seriously. For example, we research for voting for Directors.

I would just like to see lower bills.

Keep doing your best to keep costs down.

Lower rates would be nice.

Please keep prices as low as possible to help with this economy.

Energy Efficiency/Energy Audits - Negative Responses

Concerning the Smart Meters, it is suspected that we could have hackers, or they can shut off at a desk at the company, and not be driving around in their cars anymore. That could be a problem.

I wish they could come up with a way to do the energy audits of homes for less than \$400. I think such an audit would be very useful, and I have heard how helpful these are. It is just that \$400 is a rather big chunk of change. There has to be so much waste of electricity in our homes that it would help Vermont Electric to address this.

Additional Comments Energy Efficiency/Energy Audits (continued)

Energy Efficiency/Energy Audits - Neutral Responses

My bills are so high! They are usually well over \$200. Is there any way they could come out and do an audit to find out why my bills are so high? We just can't afford it!

I want a Smart Meter installed.

Do you have energy audits? Do I have to pay for it?

Do you offer any information or energy audits to help us save more?

Newsletter/Information/Social Media – Positive Responses

I am ambivalent about the wind turbines. I have visited a wind turbine project and like the idea of generating electricity that way, but I know I don't want one in my backyard. I especially like the tidbits of information in the newsletter about saving on electricity. I am just a weekend person, but I try to gather the information so I can vote in the elections nonetheless.

Newsletter/Information/Social Media – Negative Responses

Make the newsletter more interesting. It's not exciting to read. I would like to see them using more green power.

We are just here in the summer. It is country here, compared to where we live in Montreal. But still it is very expensive power here compared to Montreal. I am only interested in getting power, and I don't care about Vermont Electric's newsletter or anything else about the company.

I want more communication.

Newsletter/Information/Social Media – Neutral Responses

I would also like to be e-mailed information. When I do get information, I am always interested in renewable energy and how they get it, what companies they work with. jen@orionrising.org

The average cost of my power is \$3 a day and I think that is reasonable. I am all for communication from Vermont Electric, but I don't want them to increase the rates in order to improve how they communicate. I am very involved in the community, and I really don't see much in the way of involvement by Vermont Electric. Maybe I am missing it.

Just to give us, the customers, a communication or a sense that they are actually working to keep down the rates... or they could actually lower them. I don't see them doing anything to control the rates. I would choose to have them communicate with me by e-mail, but I don't want to give out my e-mail address right now over the phone.

Lower the rates. It would be nice if they sent out a sheet about what different electrical appliances use so the homeowners can make better choices.

Additional Comments

Newsletter/Information/Social Media – Neutral Responses (continued)

They need more multi-media messages.

On the question with the length of the newsletter, if they are holding anything back because of size, then it is too short. But if they are putting everything in there, then it is just right. The electric co-op does a good job.

Renewable Energy

We are very happy. I would like to see more renewable energy sources added and cheaper rates.

I am opposed to spending any more for renewable energy for electricity. One renewable energy source not mentioned is wood. Here in Vermont I consider wood to be a renewable energy source, and I think other people should consider it as well. I was surprised when we came here that the power was so high. We came from Con Edison which has supposedly the highest rates in the United States, but we found that Vermont Electric is just as expensive.

I have electric bills from five different residences and the rates from Vermont Electric are higher than any of the other companies I deal with. Anything they could do to make the power cost less, including using more renewable energy, would be great.

I just want them to stay away from nuclear power for generating electricity. That is never safe. I am on a fixed income and live alone, and my bill now averages \$137 a month. When I was with Citizen's it was \$56 every two months, so you can see how much electricity has gone up.

I like that they are exploring alternative energy for generating electricity. Also, I would like the rates to come down and be more competitive with some of the other companies in the area.

I think their rates are ridiculous. I think they need to find a way to lower their rates. I've been talking to others about getting our own source of power. The state of Vermont has grants for it.

I would like to see less expensive power for local business. I think we spend a lot on green energy, but Vermont can't afford it.

There is no competition of course, and we can't go anywhere else. Our bill averages over \$200 a month and we can't do much about it. The most important comment is that they should provide as much electricity as possible for the least amount of cost to the customers. I am not for or against electricity from renewable energy. I am only interested in the rates.

This is just for service at my camp. I have to pay \$16 a month in the winter, and I tried to get the power shut off for the winter, but I found out that that would cost more than just paying the \$16. I am on a fixed income so every dollar makes a difference. I actually like the use of wind energy for electricity, but then I might change my mind if I had to have those wind towers very close to my home.

It is too expensive. Get nuclear power back

In Vermont, we are supposed to enjoy the beauty of the hillsides, not look at ugly wind towers. Vermont Electric is good with outages. They just need to stabilize the rates and keep the bills from always going up.

I have power so I am basically happy with them. I am also happy with them because they are trying to get electricity from alternative sources.

Additional Comments

Renewable Energy (continued)

At a previous company we had off-peak rates, but I don't think Vermont Electric has these. The off-peak rates certainly lowered our bill. I did contact them about selling back electricity from our wind turbine, but they said they could not give us a credit for that. They should do more in this area. My husband and I take the idea of a cooperative seriously. For example, we research for voting for Directors.

This is for our camp in Vermont. I actually live in Quebec. Although I favor hydroelectric dams for electricity, Vermont Electric gets its power from dams in Quebec which I am not in favor of. I have always been pleased with their service. About five years ago, a wire broke at our camp, and within two hours, Vermont Electric had fixed the wire, and this is a fairly isolated area. You would not get this kind of service in Quebec.

Wind tower projects on the ridgelines would necessitate the building of access roads to the ridgelines and I think that might hurt hunting, which I am a big advocate of. Vermont Electric has done a good job in recent years of clearing the trees from the lines and so now we don't have so many outages.

You know I am for using nuclear energy to produce electricity. It is just that Vermont Yankee has not been that honest.

I am ambivalent about the wind turbines. I have visited a wind turbine project and like the idea of generating electricity that way, but I know I don't want one in my backyard. I especially like the tidbits of information in the newsletter about saving on electricity. I am just a weekend person, but I try to gather the information so I can vote in the elections nonetheless.

I would certainly be willing to pay extra each month for renewable energy power, but only if I perceive that it is not just PR. I want to be convinced that it is a locally generated power such as methane from the farmers here. Also I am all for electricity from existing hydro dams, but I am opposed to constructing new dams. I really like the idea that Vermont Electric is a small local company as opposed to being associated with a mammoth company.

They have been doing a good job so far. I am definitely for solar or wind power.

Basically they need to expand renewable options, net metering, and they need to be 100% renewable energy.

I actually prefer natural gas as a way of generating electricity. Some of the other things you mentioned, like the methane gas, sounds a little messy. I am also opposed to the wind farms.

I am aware that the renewable energy sources are still notoriously inefficient, but nonetheless I still want to see more research done in this area.

I am not in favor of the wind development in the low mountains.

I am so fed up with this wind stuff. I hear the blasting from here, thinking it was thunder.

I am tied to their grid with my solar panels, and I get a credit each month for the power they buy from me. What I don't understand is that then there is an extra charge of \$6 a month that I have to pay for just being tied into the grid. I don't think that is right.

I am very interested in wind power, and in fact I took a trip to visit the wind farms in New York. It was fascinating. What I couldn't understand is why they don't let the towers produce as much electricity as they can at one time. They said that they were only allowed to produce so much electricity at a time. They should fix that.

I am with Green Mountain Power at home, and it is into the wind turbines hot and heavy. I think Vermont Electric should do the same. I support any alternative energy for electricity.

Additional Comments Renewable Energy (continued)

I appreciate their investigation of renewable energy.

I don't care what kind of renewable energy they use to generate electricity; I just want them to use renewable energy. All the kinds you mentioned are acceptable to me.

I sure wish they would get out of the wind energy. I just don't want to see them blow up the mountains.

I think they should have incentive programs for people who want to explore or use solar or wind energy and/or other sources of renewable energy.

I wish they would put in more wind towers.

I would also like to be e-mailed information. When I do get information, I am always interested in renewable energy and how they get it, what companies they work with. jen@orionrising.org

I would like to see more time and resources put into obtaining electricity from renewable energy sources.

I would stay with nuclear power as long as you can. Ask the customers "Do you want to pay 14 cents or 56 cents per kilowatt for the power?" and they will change to nuclear. Can we spend one million dollars to have wind energy and then take in only \$25,000? They need to think this over.

If an electric company wanted to help the community, they should put up windmills, even help out members that wanted to. We need to use green energy, and they are poor at this. I am even willing to let them use my property for this.

If they are looking for other ways to generate electricity, I would be more interested in trash incineration or biomass.

If they were more honest about the wind power, it would be better for us. There is not a good outlook for us on this right now.

It would be nice if the total cost of electric would include green energy ways.

Keep God's country green.

Make the newsletter more interesting. It's not exciting to read. I would like to see them using more green power.

My real opinion of Vermont Electric depends on how quickly they transition to renewable energy. The more quickly they do that, the more I will like them. As far as wind towers on the ridgelines, I would expect they would study things like the migratory patterns of birds before they implemented such a project, but I support such projects totally.

No wind power.

Some people in Vermont protest and complain about the wind towers, but I would like one in my back yard. I don't care if people would come and protest.

The cheapest power to produce is nuclear. We just have to make sure that the plants are taken care of correctly. Even wind turbines on the ridges are okay if the project is handled correctly.

They better watch out for the Canadians; they are rejecting the turbines.

We need to be looking strongly at our renewable future.

Additional Comments
Renewable Energy
(continued)

Vermont Electric is pushing wind power. The amount of power you get from wind power is not worth the investment, particularly when you consider that wind power is a type of visual pollution. Vermont Electric is opposed to having a nuclear power plant in Vermont, but I totally support nuclear power. It is an extremely clean and efficient source of electricity.

You can put up wind towers on my land.

Other Comments

I think they are doing a real good job and I am very proud and glad to be associated with them. I called Vermont to check on you this morning and they said yes they were doing this, so I asked for your number and they said they could not give it, that you are an independent contractor that did surveys, so I was so hoping you would call back again tonight! Thanks for calling back! This is our secondary home and I just love Vermont Electric.

I think the rates should be lower and I don't think we should buy energy from Canada. Create more American jobs. Build nuclear plants.

Stay away from Green Mountain Power.

They should have Internet service through their lines.

Are you connected with Green Mountain Power?

I am on a list for high demand because of my oxygen.

I think they need to figure out a way to sell power to people that want to purchase it, that you have a choice. I am from Milton and the power all comes from the same place.

This is my vacation home and I will retire there eventually.

This is only a summer place.

Appendix C: Questionnaire

**2012 Vermont Electric Cooperative
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.8**
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 Q7**)
- a. Did you contact VERMONT ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE for any other reason? IF SO, what?
___ Reason (**specify**) ___ No (**skip to Q7**) ___ Don't Know/Refused
- b. Did you contact VERMONT ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE for any other reason? IF SO, what?
___ Reason (**specify**) ___ No (**skip to Q7**) ___ Don't Know/Refused
7. 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

8. 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

9. 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 | |
10. 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

Cooperative Commitment

11. 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

Power Supply

12. 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)

13. 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

14. Do you support large-scale wind development on Vermont’s ridgelines? Please rate your opinion of this on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means you are “entirely against” wind development on the ridgelines and 5 means you are “entirely for” it.

Entirely opposed 1 2 3 4 5 Entirely for

15. How do you feel about Vermont Electric distributing electricity generated in part by nuclear power? Again, 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

Communications

16. How would you prefer Vermont Electric communicate with you about what is going on at the cooperative, including renewable energy and energy saving tips? Would your first choice be...? What would be your second choice? (**RANDOMIZE**)

	<u>1st Choice</u>	<u>2nd Choice</u>
“Co-op Life” newsletter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bill stuffers (information included with billing statement)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Newspaper	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Radio	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Automated phone message/voice mail	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Their website, www.vermontelectric.coop	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Email	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Text message	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social media (Twitter, Facebook)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

17. How would you prefer to receive **critical or time sensitive** information from VEC, such as outage information or co-op issues? **(RANDOMIZE AND CHOOSE ONE)**

- "Co-op Life" newsletter
- Bill stuffers (information included with billing statement)
- Newspaper
- Radio
- Automated phone message/voice mail
- Their website, www.vermontelectric.coop
- Email
- Text message
- Social media (Twitter, Facebook)

IF E-MAIL OR TEXT to Q16 or Q17: email: _____
Phone # for texts: _____

18. How often do you read the quarterly newsletter called "Co-op Life"?

- 1 always 2 usually 3 sometimes 4 rarely 5 never/don't receive it

19. How much of it do you usually read?

- 1 all of it 2 most of it 3 skim it 4 very little 5 not aware of it/don't receive it

20. Do you feel that the length of Co-op Life is 1 too short 2 too long 3 or about right?

21. Do you have Internet access either at home or at work? *(has_isp)*

- 1 At home 2 At work *(Skip to Q23)* 3 Both at home and work 4 Neither *(Skip to Q23)*

22. 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

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.*

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

24. What is your current employment status? *(employmt)*

- 1 Work full-time 2 Work part-time 3 At home full-time family care giver 4 Retired 5 Student 6 Not employed, not looking 7 Not employed but looking

25. What is your average monthly electric bill? *(bill3)* 1 \$50 or less 2 \$51 - \$100 3 \$101 - \$150 4 \$151 - \$200 5 \$201 to \$250 6 \$251 to \$300 7 Over \$300

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

- 1 Less than \$15,000. 2 \$15,000 to \$25,000 3 \$25,001 to \$50,000 4 \$50,001 to \$75,000. 5 \$75,001 to \$100,000. 6 \$100,001 to \$125,000 7 \$125,001 to \$150,000 8 Over \$150,000 9 DK/Refused

27. Pre-coded geographic areas from co-op database/member files: _____ [DO NOT ASK]

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

Additional Comments you would like to make about Vermont Electric Cooperative: _____

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