

# Only 52% of Energy Customers Satisfied with Customer Service



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A year of price cuts has seen the energy industry improve its image in the eyes of consumers, according to the latest independent Customer Satisfaction Report published today by [uSwitch.com](http://uSwitch.com), the price comparison and switching service. 65% of energy customers are satisfied with their supplier – a 6% increase on last year when suppliers' popularity suffered because of eye watering price hikes totalling 42% or £381.

However, while overall satisfaction levels have improved, there are still some key areas for concern, including customer service which remains a thorny issue with consumers. In fact, little over half of energy customers (52%) are satisfied with their supplier's customer service and, tellingly, only 45% of people would recommend their supplier to somebody else. Despite price cuts averaging out at 4% or £54 in total this year, only 51% of customers think their supplier is giving them value for money. Although a 6% improvement on last year, it is still 5% lower than in 2007 when suppliers last cut prices.

Suppliers are engaged in an online price war, bringing out increasingly competitive new plans. But consumers are sceptical about whether their supplier has their best interests at heart. Only 40% of customers are satisfied that their supplier has them on their best deal.

The report, based on responses from over 5,000 energy customers in the UK, suggest that suppliers are gradually getting back on track, with satisfaction levels almost as high as those of October 2007, another price cut year. However, there are clear differences between the big six suppliers. While Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE)

satisfies almost three quarters (73%) of its customers, poorest performer npower only satisfies 54%.

npower has been rated bottom for satisfaction by consumers for the second year running, but despite this has still seen an 8% improvement on last year. British Gas, which previously held the bottom slot (in 2007), has seen an 11% improvement in customer satisfaction this time.

**Ann Robinson, Consumer Policy Director at uSwitch.com, says:** "Last year's hefty price increases damaged the public's perception of [energy suppliers](#). As a result, the industry saw a noticeable drop in satisfaction levels. This year, suppliers are starting to get back on track, winning customers over by cutting prices and bringing out increasingly competitive new plans. But if they are to make a real dent they have to focus on customer service - just 52% of people are happy with customer service, which is poor by any industry's standards.

"With such clear differences between suppliers there is no excuse for consumers putting up with bad service. If you are not happy that you are on the best deal or getting value for money - speak to your supplier. Only around 1.3 million or 5% of households are on online energy plans and paying the [cheapest energy prices](#) in the market - consumers can do something about this. If you are still unhappy with the service you are getting, then it's time to look around for a new supplier. There's some good news here. Not only could you save up to £425 on your energy bill, but switching is also the one thing that suppliers consistently do well. Almost three quarters of customers (74%) are satisfied with this part of suppliers' service."

**Julie Jaglowski, npower residential customer service director, says:** "We are very pleased to see the improvement in our scores from last year and recognise that often the improvements we have made take time to come through in terms of overall customer experience. The investments we have made in systems and additional people are having an impact and we expect to see our performance continue to improve in the future."

### **Customer Satisfaction Report – highlights:**

#### **Best supplier**

**Scottish and Southern Energy** remains the customer service benchmark for the rest of the industry. It has now been voted best supplier for the sixth consecutive time. However it has seen a drop in

the number of categories it has won. Weakest areas are meter and online services.

*Tony Keeling, Director of Customer Services at Scottish and Southern Energy, says: "We are delighted to be voted top for customer service in the energy industry and it is now widely recognised that Scottish and Southern Energy sets the energy industry standard. What we aim to do now is achieve the standard of customer service set by those companies who are not in the energy industry, but are recognised as being best for customer service."*

### **Biggest improver**

**British Gas** has improved its satisfaction rating for the second year in a row. In October 2007 it was voted bottom of the big six, moving up to 5th last year and now 4th place this year. Customer satisfaction has increased by 11% this year taking it to 66% of customers satisfied – its highest ever score. Importantly it has started to reap dividends for making customer service more of a focus: it is the second most likely supplier to be recommended, it is rated 3rd for value for money and takes the top slot for offering its customers the best deal. It takes one other top slot for metering services, but its overall performance this year puts it in a strong position to creep further up the rankings in 2010.

*Phil Bentley, Managing Director of British Gas, says: "For the second year running, British Gas is moving up this league table – and this year we got our best score yet. This shows British Gas is changing and our customers are feeling the benefits of the improvements we've made and are happy to recommend us to others."*

*"This year we have made the biggest price cuts and offered the best electricity prices on average across the country, so it's no surprise we've been voted top for offering the best deals. But, we're not complacent. We have many more improvements in the pipeline, and next year we hope to take the top spot in even more categories."*

### **Improver**

**E.ON** – previously a strong contender for best supplier – slipped down in the customer satisfaction rankings last year. This year however it has fought back, moving back into 2nd place and satisfying 67% of customers. Areas of strength are its slick transfer process where it came first out of all the providers, its reward scheme which gives customers Tesco Clubcard points, meter services and value for money.

Interestingly though, its weakest area is customer service where only 52% of customers are satisfied, putting it in 4th place.

*David Bird, Customer Service Director of E.ON's retail business, says: "We are very pleased to have improved our position with regard to overall customer satisfaction and welcome this feedback, which gives us an insight into E.ON's customers' views of our products and services. We realise there are still changes we can make for the better and are working hard to improve the service we provide to our customers, while offering good value for money."*

### **In decline**

**ScottishPower** has slipped down the league to be rated 5th out of the big six suppliers for overall satisfaction. While its score of 63% is broadly in line with its score in 2006, at that time it was enough to secure it 2nd place, while today it languishes in 5th place. Areas of concern highlighted by the research are likeliness to be recommended, value for money, customer service and reward schemes.

*Neil Clitheroe, Customer Services Director at ScottishPower, says: "We continually speak to our customers and use their feedback to help us make improvements across all areas. Overall, we have improved on last year and remain the leading online provider for the 5th survey in a row. We're also the only supplier to actively encourage our existing customers to make sure they are on our best deal and, to date, almost 500,000 have taken our Savings Challenge, saving themselves up to £325 in the process."*

### **Remaining steady**

**EDF Energy** made big improvements in 2008, which it has managed to maintain this year. Despite slipping down from 2nd to 3rd place it has actually increased its satisfaction level from 63% to 67%. This year it won the award for best reward scheme. Other strong areas are customer service and energy efficiency. Weakest areas are metering and billing services, value for money and not offering customers the best deal.

*Steve Hayfield, Director, Customer Services at EDF Energy, says: "EDF Energy is committed to delivering the highest levels of service to our customers. I am pleased that all the hard work and endeavour from all of our staff over the last year has led to our overall customer satisfaction levels increasing. The report also shows that we have made a significant improvement in our customer service performance, which primarily reflects the dedication of our staff. We know we must*

*work even harder to meet our customer's changing expectations and are determined to continue developing new ways to improve our service.*

*"We are particularly delighted to have won awards for the categories 'best reward scheme' and 'energy efficiency'. Our 'Read, Reduce, Reward' scheme which rewards customers with Nectar points has proved very popular with over 650,000 customers signed up. EDF Energy strongly believes that helping people use energy more efficiently is the most effective way to provide long-term support and we have demonstrated this consistently through our actions. We are committed to working with and helping our customers to reduce their bills and their impact upon the environment, which is why we also launched Team Energy, part of Team Green Britain, earlier this year."*

[See the full version of this press release.](#)

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