



Press Release

J.D. Power and Associates Reports:

Overall Business Customer Satisfaction with Gas Utilities Improves Substantially from 2011, Driven by a Rebound in Communications Satisfaction

CenterPoint Energy-Midwest; New Jersey Natural Gas; NW Natural; Texas Gas Service; and Wisconsin Public Service Each Rank Highest in Their Respective Regions in Satisfying Gas Utility Business Customers

WESTLAKE VILLAGE, Calif.: 14 March 2012 — In a reversal from 2011, satisfaction with communications from gas utilities has improved significantly among business customers, which has contributed to a notable increase in overall satisfaction, according to the J.D. Power and Associates 2012 Gas Utility Business Customer Satisfaction StudySM released today.

Now in its seventh year, the study measures business customer satisfaction with their gas utility company in four regions: East, Midwest, South and West. Satisfaction is measured by examining six factors: billing and payment; corporate citizenship; price; communications; customer service; and field service.

In 2012, overall satisfaction among business customers of gas utilities averages 674 on a 1,000-point scale, an increase of 23 points from 2011. Satisfaction has improved among all six factors examined in the study, with the greatest gain in the communications factor, which has improved by 37 points from 2011. In contrast, satisfaction with communications declined by 17 points in 2011, compared with 2010.

The aspects of communications that have improved most from 2011 are education about important natural gas safety issues and issues that are important to the business. Furthermore, the percentage of customers who recall receiving a communication from their utility has increased to 54 percent in 2012, compared with 40 percent in 2011.

“Working with the news media is key to improving communications satisfaction,” said Chris Oberle, senior director of the energy practice at J.D. Power and Associates. “When business customers recall a positive message about a gas utility in the media, satisfaction with communications improves by about 50 percent. Particularly when promoting messages centered around safety initiatives and energy savings programs, leveraging relationships with the media may be a valuable tool in creating messaging that satisfies and resonates with customers.”

According to Oberle, gas utilities may benefit from a significant lift in satisfaction by communicating efforts to support local economic development. Among the nearly 70 percent of business gas utility customers who say their utility supports local economic development, satisfaction with corporate citizenship averages 200 points higher than among customers who say their utility does not support local economic development.

The study also finds that satisfaction with billing and payment has improved notably, increasing to an average of 730 in 2012 from 708 in 2011. The study finds that customers who receive e-bills are considerably more satisfied with billing and payment than are customers who receive paper bills. In addition, satisfaction with bill payment at the utility’s website has increased considerably, to an average of 766 in 2012 from 730 in 2011.

East Region

New Jersey Natural Gas ranks highest in the East Region for a second consecutive year with a score of 698. Following in the regional rankings are National Fuel Gas (679) and Washington Gas (673).

Midwest Region

CenterPoint Energy-Midwest and Wisconsin Public Service rank highest in the Midwest Region, in a tie, each achieving a score of 699. Following in the regional rankings is MidAmerican Energy (696).

South Region

In the South Region, Texas Gas Service ranks highest for a third consecutive year with a score of 725. Oklahoma Natural Gas (717) and Atmos Energy-South (702) follow in the regional rankings.

West Region

NW Natural Gas ranks highest in the West Region with a score of 719. Following in the regional rankings are Southwest Gas (702) and Cascade Natural Gas (697).

The study findings also include the following key trends:

- The percentage of customers who indicate they have a gas utility website account has increased to 49 percent in 2012 from 45 percent in 2011.
- Fewer customers indicate hearing about a rate increase in 2012 (36%), compared with 2011 (40%).
- Satisfaction with customer service declines notably when problems reported via phone calls take more than 10 minutes to resolve. When resolution is reached within five minutes, satisfaction with customer service averages 799. When resolution takes between 10 and 30 minutes, satisfaction averages 737. When resolution takes 30 minutes or more, satisfaction declines even further, to an average of 560.
- Overall satisfaction averages 58 points higher than the industry average among business customers who have a dedicated call center contact. However, satisfaction averages 108 points higher than average among customers who are assigned a traditional business account manager at their gas utility.

The 2012 Gas Utility Business Customer Satisfaction Study is based on online interviews with representatives of more than 10,200 U.S. businesses that spend between \$200 and \$50,000 monthly on natural gas. More than 50 utility brands—each serving more than 25,000 business customers—are included in the study. The study was fielded from May to July 2011 and October to December 2011.

About J.D. Power and Associates

Headquartered in Westlake Village, Calif., J.D. Power and Associates is a global marketing information services company providing forecasting, performance improvement, social media and customer satisfaction insights and solutions. The company's quality and satisfaction measurements are based on responses from millions of consumers annually. For more information on [car reviews and ratings](#), [car insurance](#), [health insurance](#), [cell phone ratings](#), and more, please visit JDPower.com. J.D. Power and Associates is a business unit of The McGraw-Hill Companies.

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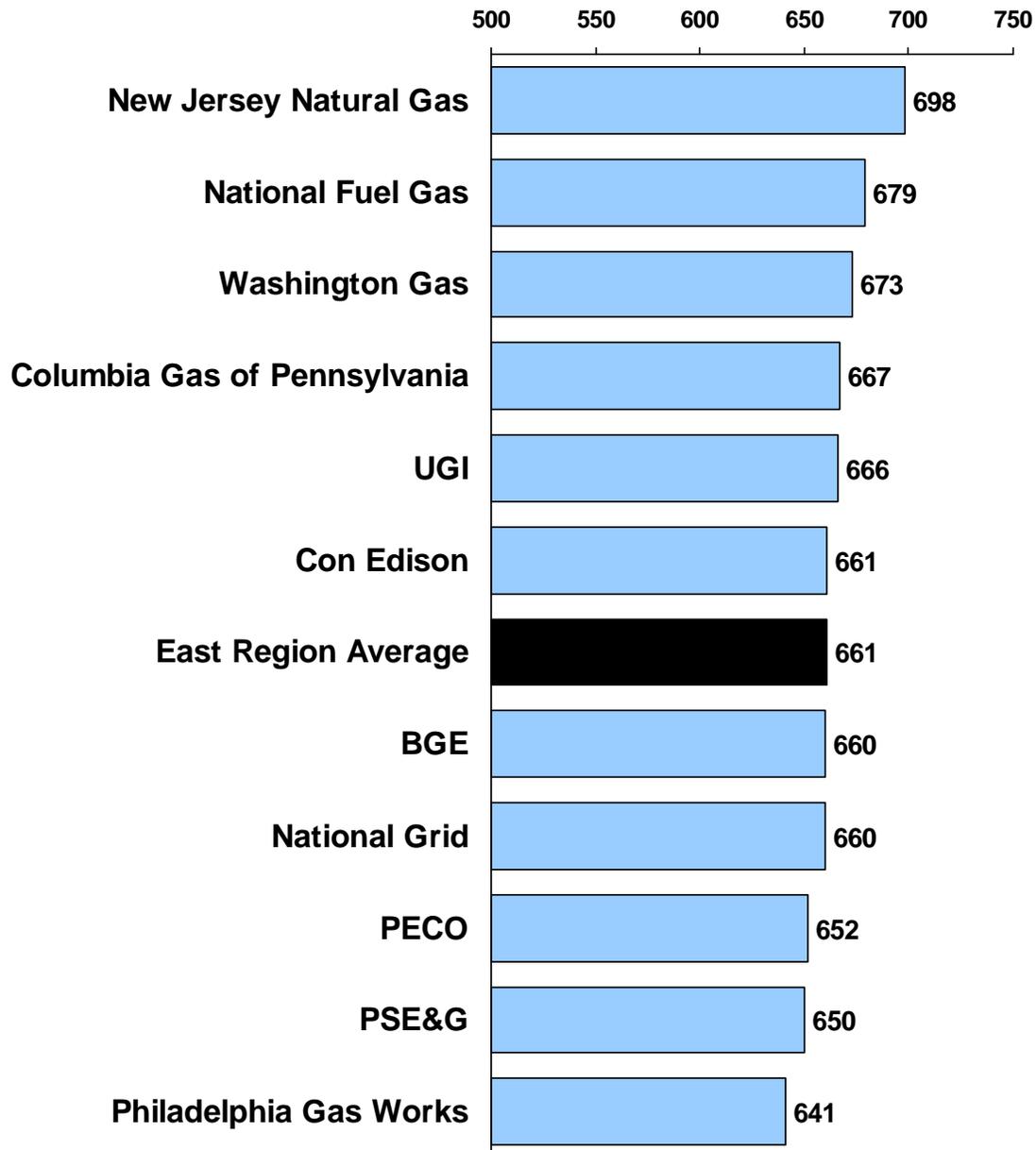
NOTE: Four charts follow.

J.D. Power and Associates 2012 Gas Utility Business Customer Satisfaction StudySM

Customer Satisfaction Index Ranking

(Based on a 1,000-point scale)

East Region



Source: J.D. Power and Associates 2012 Gas Utility Business Customer Satisfaction StudySM

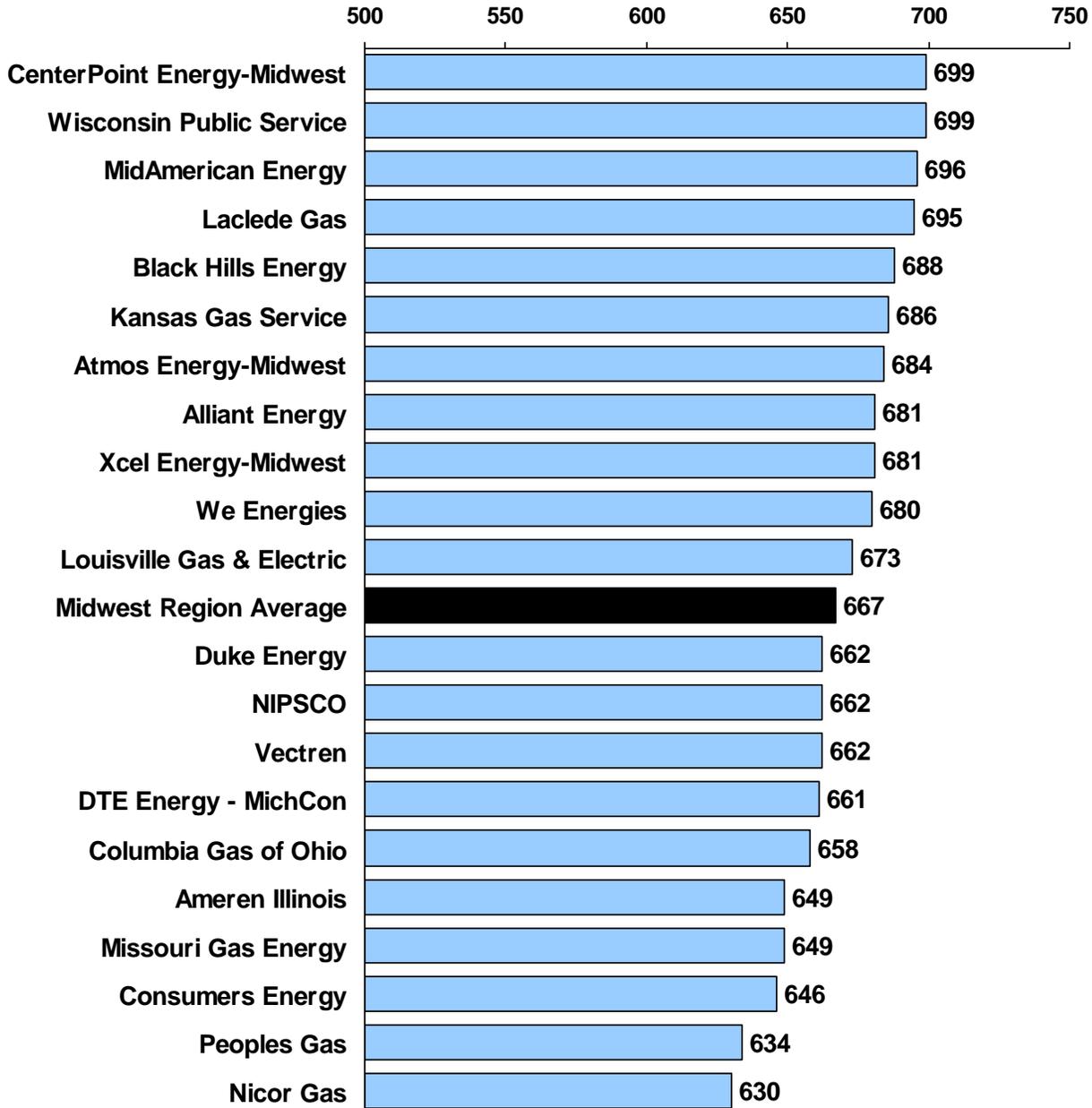
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J.D. Power and Associates 2012 Gas Utility Business Customer Satisfaction StudySM

Customer Satisfaction Index Ranking

(Based on a 1,000-point scale)

Midwest Region



Source: J.D. Power and Associates 2012 Gas Utility Business Customer Satisfaction StudySM

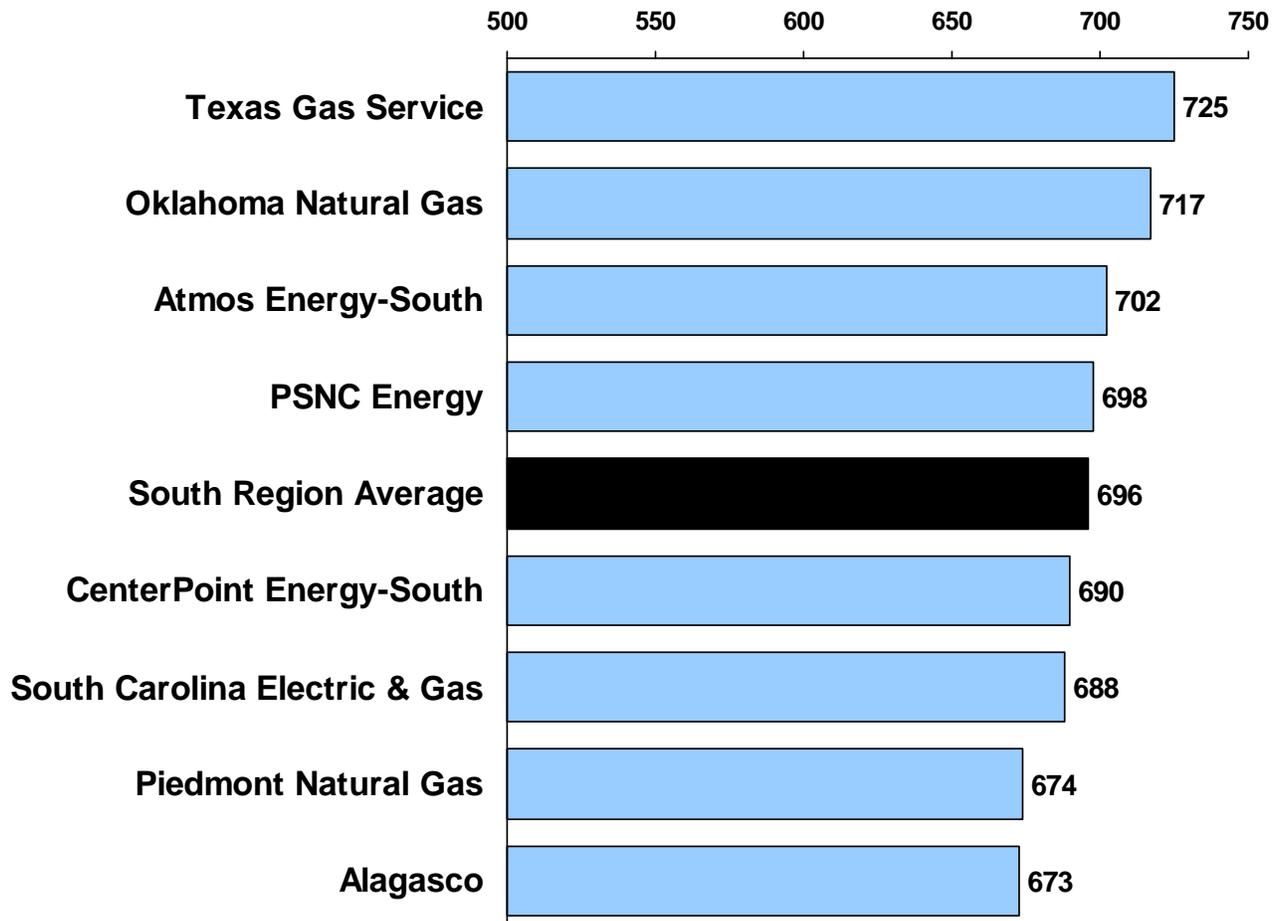
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J.D. Power and Associates 2012 Gas Utility Business Customer Satisfaction StudySM

Customer Satisfaction Index Ranking

(Based on a 1,000-point scale)

South Region



Source: J.D. Power and Associates 2012 Gas Utility Business Customer Satisfaction StudySM

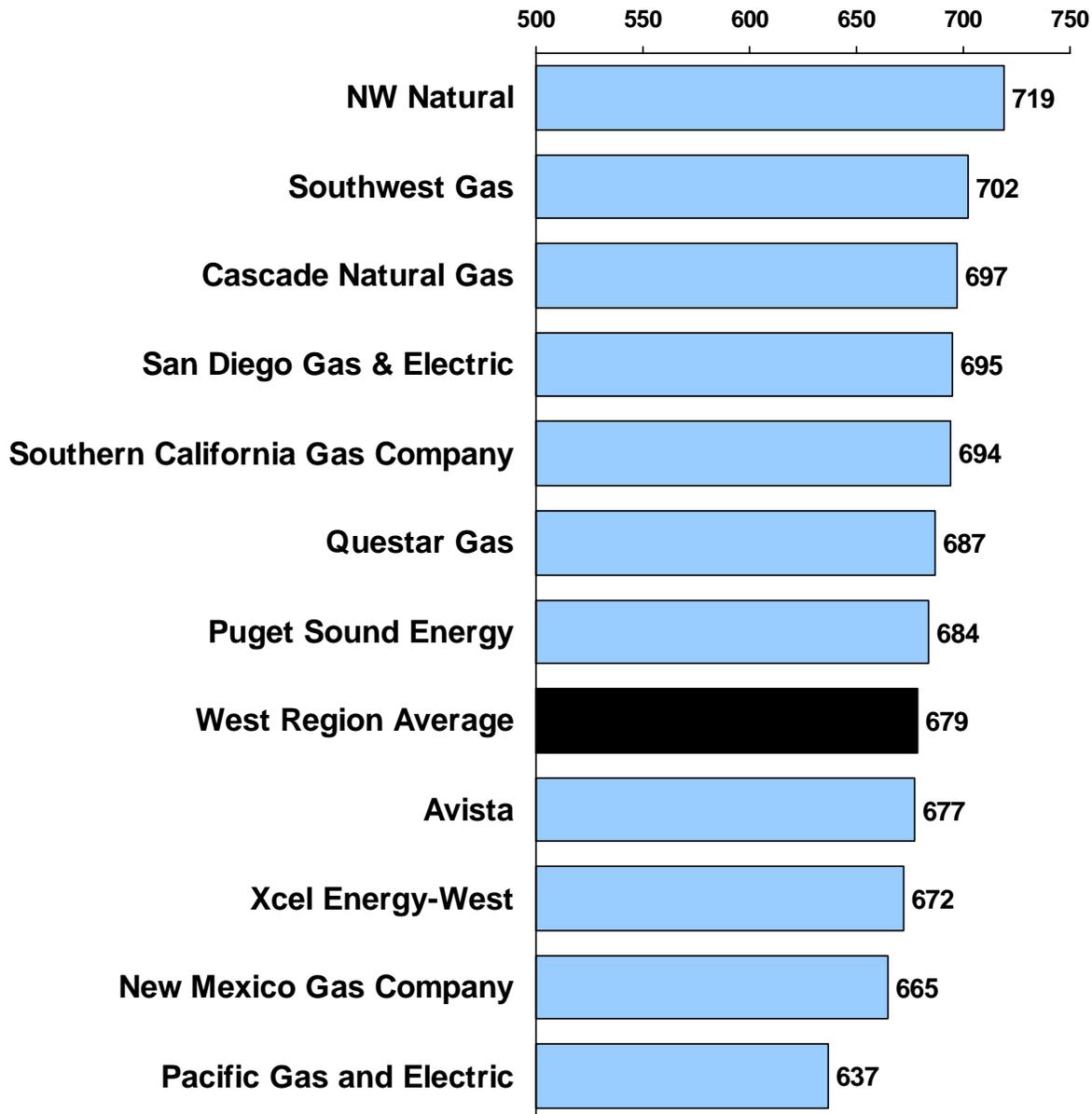
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J.D. Power and Associates 2012 Gas Utility Business Customer Satisfaction StudySM

Customer Satisfaction Index Ranking

(Based on a 1,000-point scale)

West Region



Note: Intermountain Gas Company, Montana-Dakota Utilities, and NorthWestern Energy are included in the study but not ranked due to small sample size.

Source: J.D. Power and Associates 2012 Gas Utility Business Customer Satisfaction StudySM

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