



Press Release

J.D. Power and Associates Reports: Natural Gas Retailers in Georgia Achieve Satisfied and Committed Customers Due to Excellent Customer Service Practices

WESTLAKE VILLAGE, Calif.: 13 June 2012 — In Georgia, in which the retail natural gas market is deregulated, highly satisfied customers make more recommendations and are more committed to their retailer than do less satisfied customers, according to the J.D. Power and Associates 2012 Georgia Natural Gas Retailer Residential Customer Satisfaction StudySM released today.

The study measures customer satisfaction with retail natural gas providers in Georgia by examining four key factors (listed in order of importance): price; billing and payment; communications; and customer service. Beginning in 1998, the natural gas utility market in the Georgia was deregulated and opened to retail competition. According to the Energy Information Administration, approximately 1.4 million Georgia households are served by retail natural gas providers.

“Through customer service excellence, gas retailers in Georgia have been able to differentiate their brands,” said Andrew Heath, senior director of the energy practice at J.D. Power and Associates. “By providing more accessible and helpful means of answering customer questions and addressing general concerns, some retailers have been able to achieve highly satisfied and committed customers, which contributes to their growth.”

The study finds a strong correlation between highly committed¹ customers and high overall customer satisfaction scores for natural gas retailers, among other measures. For example, 13 percent of natural gas customers in Georgia are highly committed to their provider, compared with 28 percent of low commitment customers. The following are examples of metrics regarding highly committed customers, compared with low committed customers.

- The average satisfaction score of highly committed customers is 892 vs. 568 among low committed customers
- Seven in 10 (70%) highly committed customers say they “definitely will” recommend their retailer to family and friends vs. 2% of low committed customers
- Highly committed customers make an average of 3.3 positive recommendations per year vs. 0.3 for low committed customers
- Slightly more than three-fourths (77%) of highly committed customers say they “definitely will” repurchase their gas service from the same retailer vs. 17% of low committed customers

Customer commitment is primarily driven by the customer experience, and comprises 64 percent of the overall impact on customers’ commitment level to their retailer.

Overall satisfaction among natural gas customers in Georgia averages 690, an increase of 23 points from 2011. All brands ranked in the 2011 study have experienced an increase in satisfaction. Satisfaction is particularly high in the customer service (777) and billing and payment (740) factors, and lowest in communications (626).

¹ Each response to the agreement questions on the survey is assigned a score. “completely agree” equals 5 points, “agree” equals 4 points, “neither agree nor disagree” equals 3 points, “disagree” equals 2 points, and “completely disagree” equals 1 point. High commitment is calculated as 17 to 20 points; medium commitment as 12 to 16 points; and low commitment as 1 to 11 points.

The study finds that 57 percent of natural gas customers in Georgia chose their current retailer because of price, followed by 13 percent who selected their retailer based on a recommendation. After selecting a retailer, natural gas customers are likely to stay with that retailer. A majority of customers (85%) have been a customer of their current natural gas retailer for more than one year.

Georgia Natural Gas Retailer Residential Results

Walton EMC ranks highest among natural gas retailers in Georgia, achieving a score of 742 and performing well in all four factors. Following in the rankings are SCANA Energy Regulated Division (703)² and Coweta-Fayette EMC (700).

“Contributing to Walton EMC’s high ranking are the communications best practices they employ,” said Heath. “The customer’s ability to remember a Walton EMC communication has increased significantly to 40 percent—up from 21 percent in 2011. The effort to communicate to their customers bodes well in building brand loyalty and developing commitment to the brand.”

The 2012 Georgia Natural Gas Retailer Residential Customer Satisfaction Study is based on responses from more than 3,550 customers of natural gas retailers in Georgia. The study was fielded quarterly between July 2011 and April 2012.

For more information, view Georgia retail gas provider ratings at JDpower.com.

About J.D. Power and Associates

Headquartered in Westlake Village, Calif., J.D. Power and Associates is a global marketing information services company providing 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: One chart follows

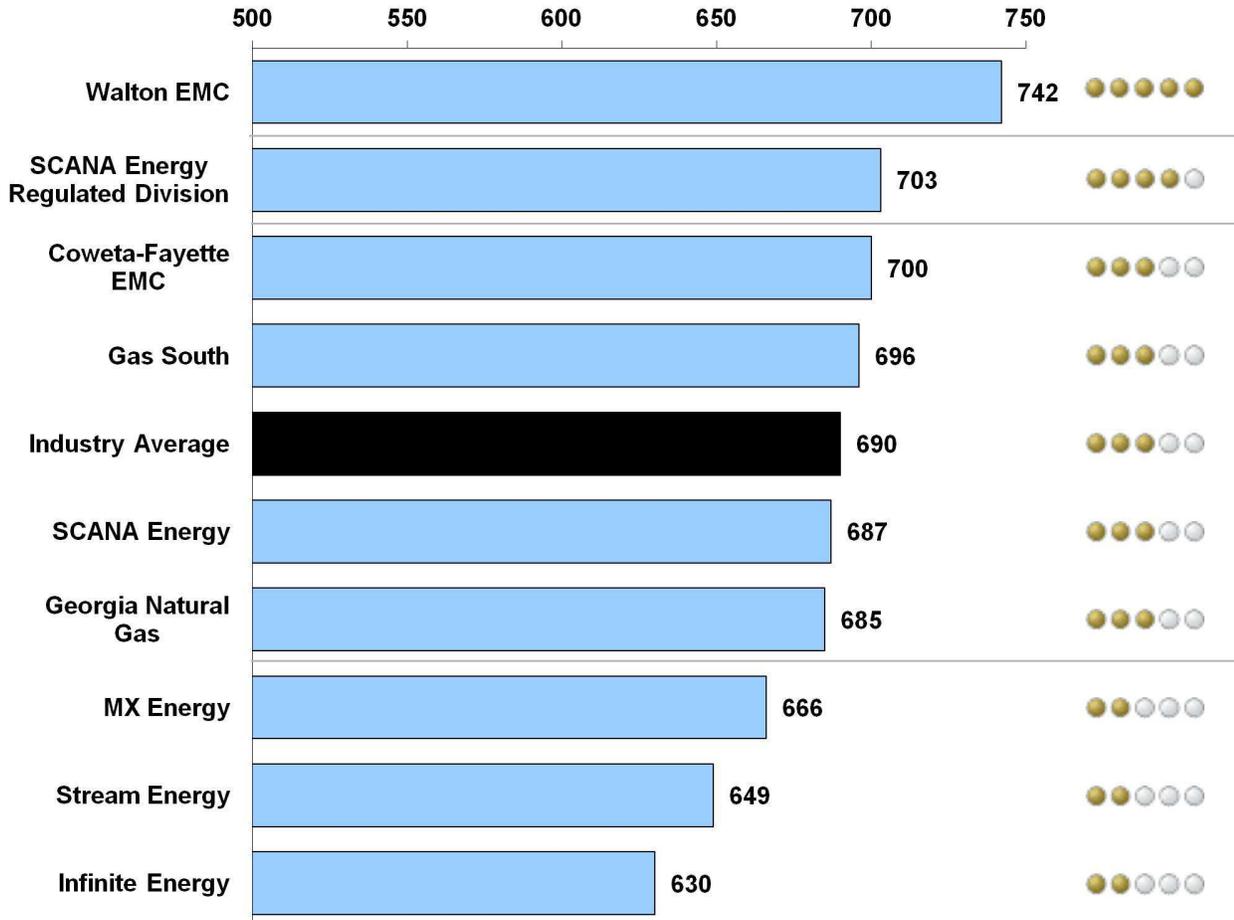
² SCANA Energy is ranked separately from SCANA Energy Regulated Division. The SCANA Energy Regulated Division provides natural gas service to low-income and elderly customers and to individuals whose credit history prohibits them from obtaining service from other gas retailers.

J.D. Power and Associates 2012 Georgia Natural Gas Retailer Residential Customer Satisfaction StudySM

Customer Satisfaction Index Ranking

(Based on a 1,000-point scale)

JDPower.com
Power Circle RatingsTM
for consumers:



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Source: J.D. Power and Associates 2012 Georgia Natural Gas Retailer Residential Customer Satisfaction StudySM

Power Circle Ratings Legend

- Among the best
- Better than most
- About average
- The rest

Charts and graphs extracted from this press release must be accompanied by a statement identifying J.D. Power and Associates as the publisher and the J.D. Power and Associates 2012 Georgia Natural Gas Retailer Residential Customer Satisfaction StudySM as the source. Rankings are based on numerical scores, and not necessarily on statistical significance. JDPower.com Power Circle RatingsTM are derived from consumer ratings in J.D. Power studies. For more information on Power Circle Ratings, visit jdpower.com/faqs. No advertising or other promotional use can be made of the information in this release or J.D. Power and Associates survey results without the express prior written consent of J.D. Power and Associates.