

Small Business Customer Satisfaction with Electric Utilities Could Use Digital Charge, J.D. Power Finds

Effects of Pandemic on Their Business Leads to Lower Satisfaction Scores

TROY, Mich.: 18 Nov. 2020 — Overall business customer satisfaction with electric utilities has climbed this year, aided by record high reliability scores, but serious gaps in satisfaction exist between small and large businesses. According to the J.D. Power 2020 Electric Utility Business Customer Satisfaction Study,SM released today, satisfaction among large businesses has increased eight points (on a 1,000-point scale) during the pandemic but has declined 11 points among small businesses during the same period.

"While overall customer satisfaction remains high this year, it should be cause for concern that smaller businesses that have been more significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic are, in many cases, less aware of relief efforts and not receiving the same level of outreach as bigger businesses," said **Adrian Chung, director of utilities intelligence at J.D. Power**. "Peel back the layers of the data and it's clear that utilities need to fully leverage digital channels in an effective manner to engage with the broad population of small business customers."

Following are some key findings of the 2020 study:

- **Business customer satisfaction climbs:** Overall business customer satisfaction with electric utilities is 793, up 14 points from 2019, driven largely by improvements in customer contact and power quality and reliability. Nearly one-third (31%) of business customers say they received perfect power throughout 2020, up from 29% in 2019. Among those businesses that did experience an outage, 61% say they received some form of proactive communication from their utility.
- **Digital channels highly effective and most often used for connecting with utilities:** Overall satisfaction among business customers that interact digitally with their electric utility via website and mobile app is 26 points higher than among those that communicate primarily by phone. Most digital customers also say their utility is easy to do business with and is a valued business partner.
- **A performance gap:** Overall satisfaction among large businesses has increased eight points during the COVID-19 pandemic, while satisfaction among small and medium-sized businesses has declined during the same period. Small businesses posted the largest decline (-11 points) from the pre-pandemic period of Feb. 12-March 11 through the end of fielding in October. Small businesses in the study also cite increased financial stress during the pandemic, with 27% saying they are financially worse off now than before the pandemic.
- **Awareness of relief efforts:** Overall customer satisfaction is significantly higher (73 points) among the 64% of businesses that are aware of COVID-19-related relief efforts, such as late payment forgiveness, waived charges and fees and community support initiatives. However, 36% of business customers say they are unaware of these efforts.

Study Rankings

Within each of the four U.S. geographic regions included in the study, utility providers are classified into one of two segments: large (serving 85,000 or more business customers) and midsize (serving 40,000-84,999 business customers). The following utilities rank highest in business customer satisfaction in their respective region:

- East Large: **BGE and Con Edison** (tie) (BGE ranks highest for a fourth consecutive year.)
- East Midsize: **Peppco**
- Midwest Large: **Ohio Edison**
- Midwest Midsize: **Kentucky Utilities** (for a second consecutive year)
- South Large: **Georgia Power** (for a third consecutive year)
- South Midsize: **Southwestern Electric Power**
- West Large: **Idaho Power**
- West Midsize: **Seattle City Light**

The 2020 Electric Utility Business Customer Satisfaction Study, now in its 22nd year, measures satisfaction among business customers of 88 targeted U.S. electric utilities, each of which serves more than 40,000 business customers. In aggregate, these utilities provide electricity to more than 12 million customers.

Overall satisfaction is examined across six factors (listed in order of importance): power quality and reliability; corporate citizenship; price; billing and payment; communications; and customer contact. The study is based on responses from 18,457 online interviews of business customers in decision-making roles related to their utility company. The study was fielded from February through October 2020.

For more information about the J.D. Power Electric Utility Business Customer Satisfaction Study, visit <https://www.jdpower.com/business/utilities/electric-utility-business-customer-satisfaction-study>.

To view the online press release, please visit <http://www.jdpower.com/pr-id/2020130>.

J.D. Power is a global leader in consumer insights, advisory services and data and analytics. A pioneer in the use of big data, artificial intelligence (AI) and algorithmic modeling capabilities to understand consumer behavior, J.D. Power has been delivering incisive industry intelligence on customer interactions with brands and products for more than 50 years. The world's leading businesses across major industries rely on J.D. Power to guide their customer-facing strategies.

J.D. Power is headquartered in Troy, Mich., and has offices in North America, Europe and Asia Pacific. To learn more about the company's business offerings, visit JDPower.com/business. The J.D. Power auto shopping tool can be found at JDPower.com.

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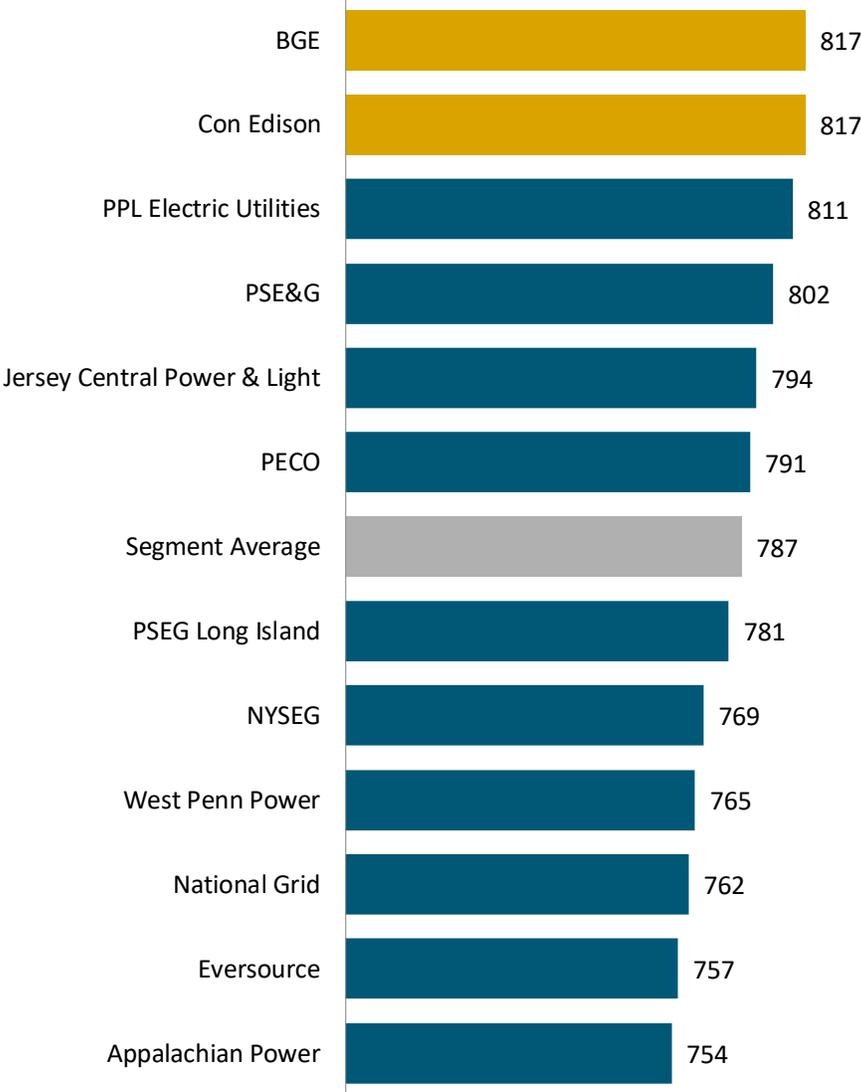
NOTE: Eight charts follow.

J.D. Power 2020 Electric Utility Business Customer Satisfaction StudySM

Overall Customer Satisfaction Index Ranking

(Based on a 1,000-point scale)

East Region: Large Segment



Source: J.D. Power 2020 Electric Utility Business Customer Satisfaction StudySM

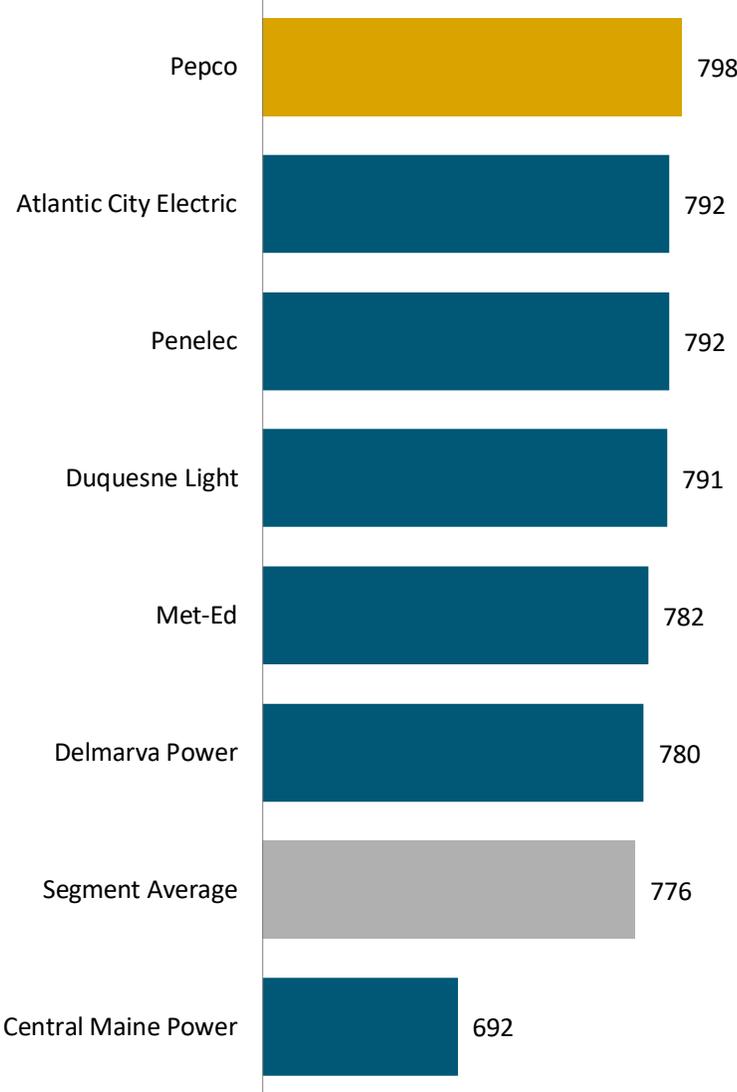
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J.D. Power 2020 Electric Utility Business Customer Satisfaction StudySM

Overall Customer Satisfaction Index Ranking

(Based on a 1,000-point scale)

East Region: Midsize Segment



Source: J.D. Power 2020 Electric Utility Business Customer Satisfaction StudySM

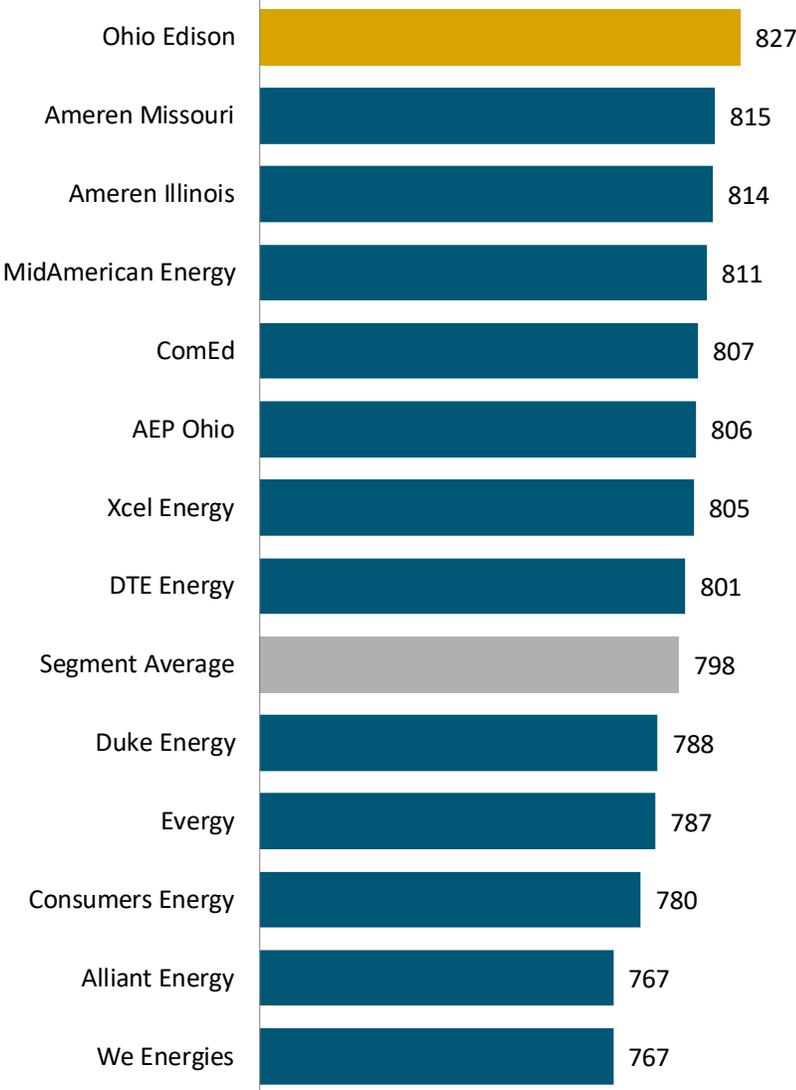
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J.D. Power 2020 Electric Utility Business Customer Satisfaction StudySM

Overall Customer Satisfaction Index Ranking

(Based on a 1,000-point scale)

Midwest Region: Large Segment



Source: J.D. Power 2020 Electric Utility Business Customer Satisfaction StudySM

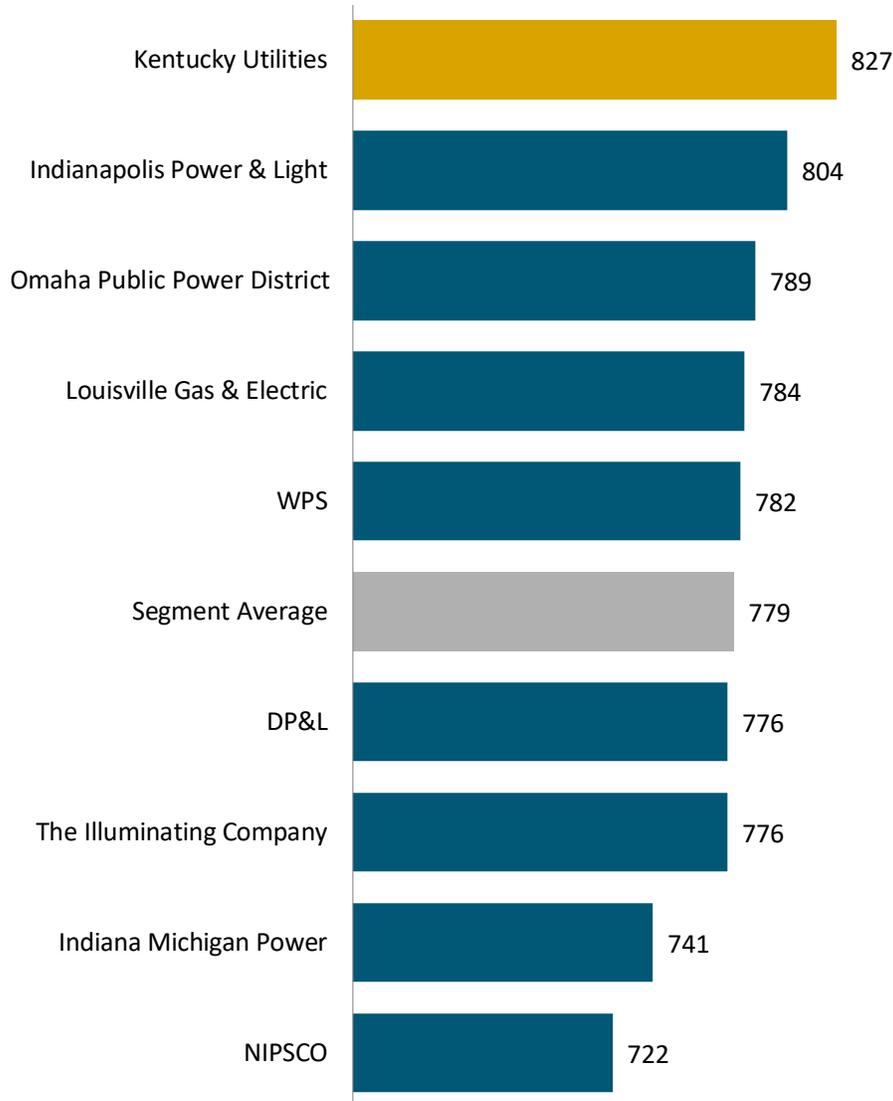
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J.D. Power 2020 Electric Utility Business Customer Satisfaction StudySM

Overall Customer Satisfaction Index Ranking

(Based on a 1,000-point scale)

Midwest Region: Midsize Segment



Source: J.D. Power 2020 Electric Utility Business Customer Satisfaction StudySM

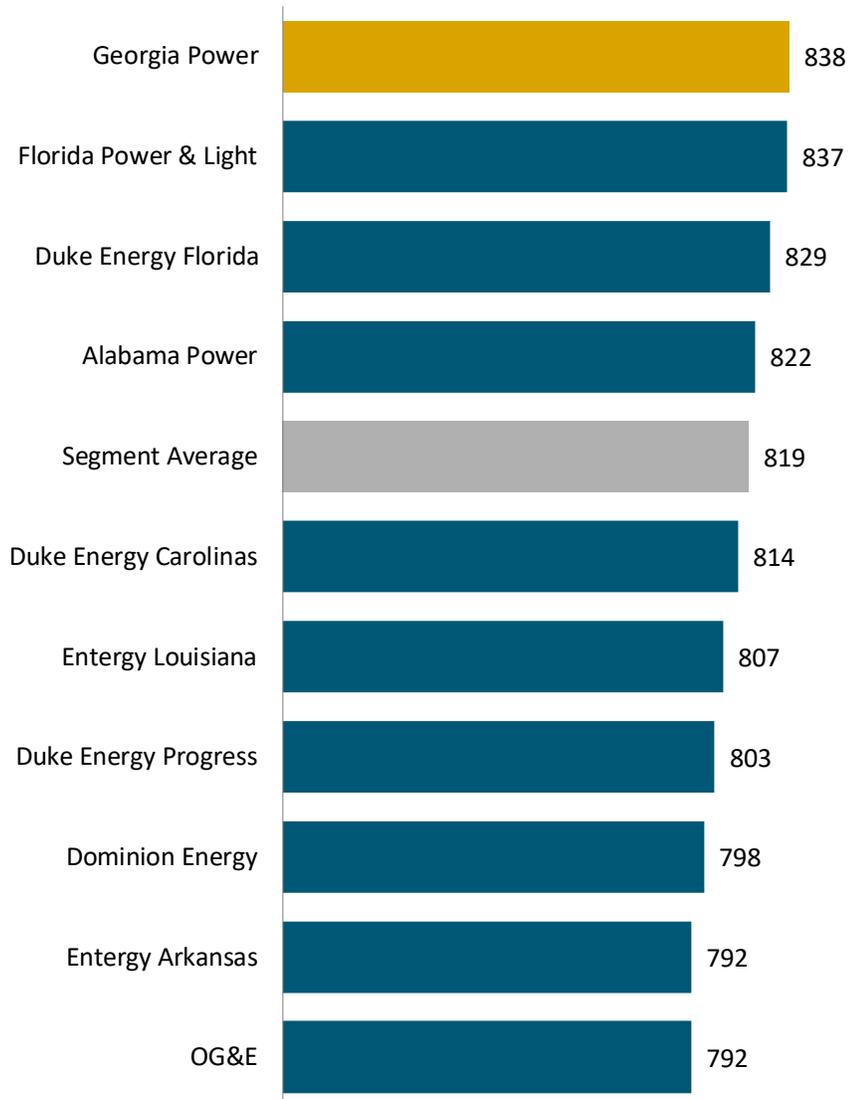
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J.D. Power 2020 Electric Utility Business Customer Satisfaction StudySM

Overall Customer Satisfaction Index Ranking

(Based on a 1,000-point scale)

South Region: Large Segment



Source: J.D. Power 2020 Electric Utility Business Customer Satisfaction StudySM

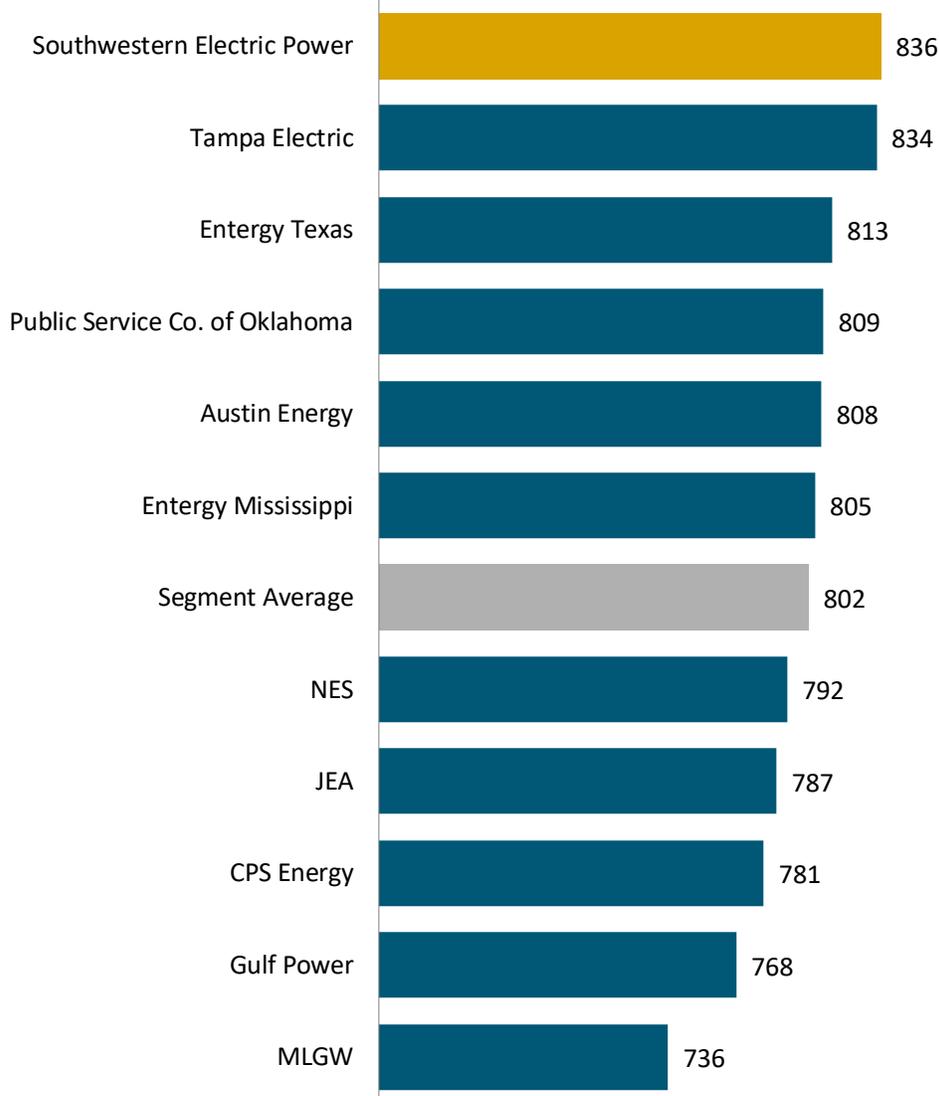
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J.D. Power 2020 Electric Utility Business Customer Satisfaction StudySM

Overall Customer Satisfaction Index Ranking

(Based on a 1,000-point scale)

South Region: Midsize Segment



Source: J.D. Power 2020 Electric Utility Business Customer Satisfaction StudySM

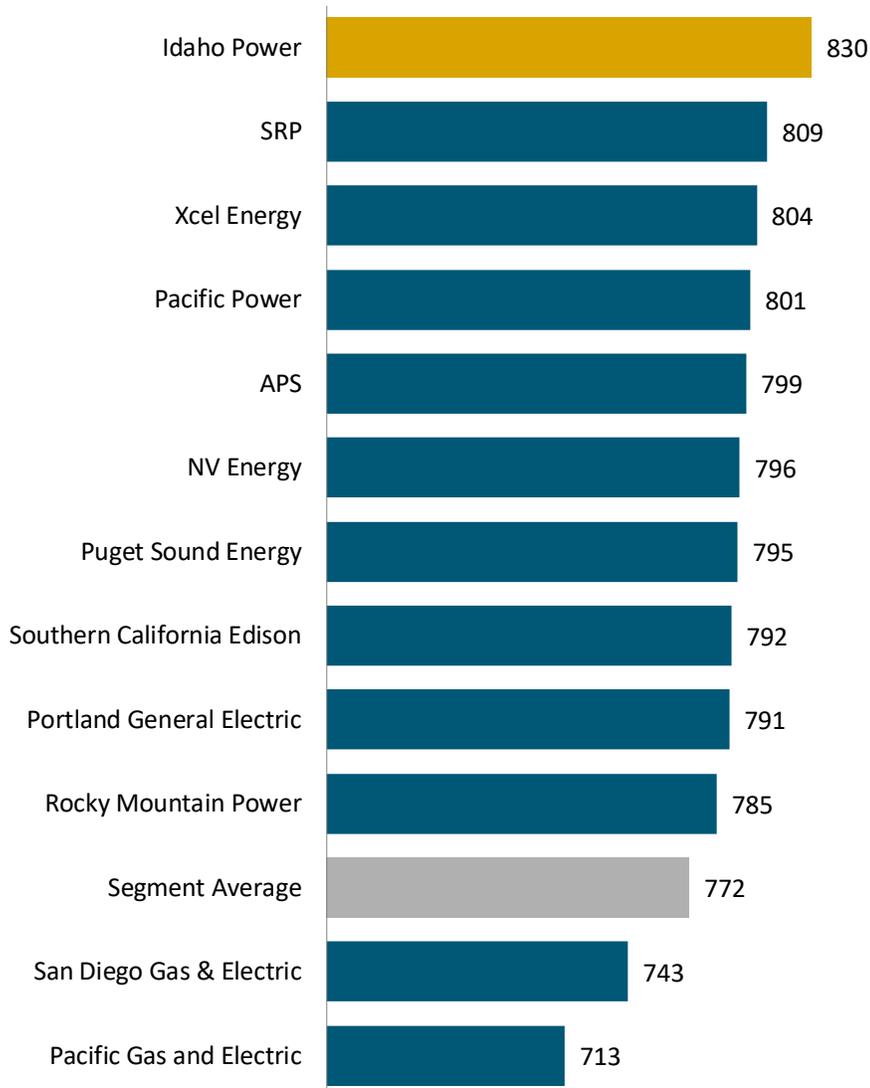
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J.D. Power 2020 Electric Utility Business Customer Satisfaction StudySM

Overall Customer Satisfaction Index Ranking

(Based on a 1,000-point scale)

West Region: Large Segment



Source: J.D. Power 2020 Electric Utility Business Customer Satisfaction StudySM

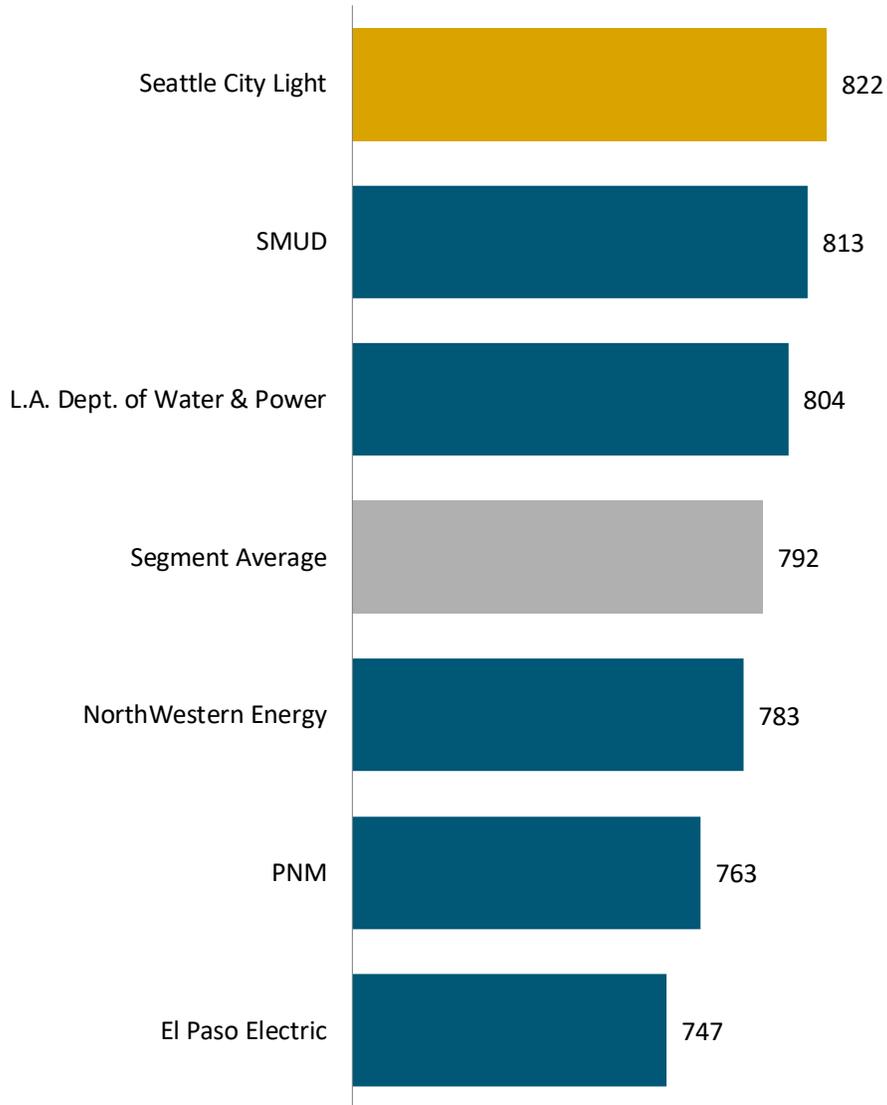
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J.D. Power 2020 Electric Utility Business Customer Satisfaction StudySM

Overall Customer Satisfaction Index Ranking

(Based on a 1,000-point scale)

West Region: Midsize Segment



Source: J.D. Power 2020 Electric Utility Business Customer Satisfaction StudySM

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