

# Water Utility Residential Customer Satisfaction Rises Despite Persistently High Costs, JD Power Finds

Rising Satisfaction Driven by Improvements in Service and Communication

- Overall satisfaction improves across all study dimensions
- Massive gaps between highest- and lowest-ranked utilities underscore wide variation in customer experience
- Opportunities emerge for utilities to help customers budget and manage costs

**TROY, Mich.: 6 May 2026** – Even with average monthly water bills hovering at \$100, nationwide, just \$1.00 lower than the record high reached in 2025, customer satisfaction with local water utilities has risen this year, driven by notable gains in customer service and perceptions of cost, according to the JD Power 2026 U.S. Water Utility Residential Customer Satisfaction Study,<sup>SM</sup> released today. Overall satisfaction is up 8 points year over year to 523 (on a 1,000-point scale), suggesting that clearer communication and better support are helping utilities boost satisfaction scores without relying on lower costs.

“Households are feeling cost pressure from all sides, so it’s notable that water utilities are receiving higher scores on both cost and customer service without lowering bill amounts,” said **John Hazen, managing director of utilities intelligence at JD Power**. “The data indicates that when utilities acknowledge customer pressures, explain charges in plain language and give customers more control over how and when they pay their bills, satisfaction improves, even in a flat-cost environment.”

Following are some key findings of the 2026 index:

- **Room to improve on cost management:** Some of the highest-impact key performance indicators (KPIs) related to cost—such as offering flexible bill due dates, budget billing plans and assistance to help lower bills—are delivered less than half the time, leaving significant room for improvement in cost satisfaction. While cost remains the lowest-scoring dimension in the index, it improves by 10 points this year to 432.
- **Generational satisfaction gap greatest in cost:** Cost satisfaction is lowest among Boomers<sup>1</sup> (398) and Gen X (399), with 31% and 34%, respectively, saying they are worse off financially compared with a year ago. In contrast, Gen Z (481) is the most satisfied with cost, resulting in an 83-point gap in cost satisfaction between the highest- and lowest-scoring generations. This indicates that cost satisfaction is

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<sup>1</sup> JD Power defines Pre-Boomers as born before 1946; Boomers (1946-1964); Gen X (1965-1976); Gen Y (1977-1994); Gen Z (1995-2004). Millennials (1982-1994) are a subset of Gen Y.

being shaped more by generational financial circumstances than by uniform changes in utility pricing or performance.

- **Gap between utilities grows:** The gap between the overall satisfaction scores for the highest- and lowest-ranked residential water utilities has grown to 219 points in this year's study, up from 212 points in 2025, illustrating the wide variation in experience among customers of different utilities. The largest performance gaps between water utilities are in problem resolution (270-point delta) and trust (257), indicating that how well utilities resolve issues and build customer confidence is a key differentiator, with uneven performance across the industry.

## Index Rankings

The index measures customer satisfaction with water utilities in eight geographic regions. Highest-ranked utilities and scores, by region, are as follows:

- Midwest Large: **Missouri American Water** (564)
- Midwest Midsize: **Metropolitan Utilities District (Omaha)** (548) (for a third consecutive year)
- Northeast Large: **Aquarion Water Company** (557)
- Northeast Midsize: **Boston Water and Sewer Commission** (609)
- South Large: **Gwinnett County** (569)
- South Midsize: **OUC** (615)
- West Large: **Seattle Public Utilities** (582) (for a third consecutive year)
- West Midsize: **Colorado Springs Utilities** (554)

The U.S. Water Utility Residential Customer Satisfaction Study, now in its 11th year, measures satisfaction among residential customers of 92 water utilities that deliver water to populations of at least 400,000 and results are reported for eight geographic regions in two size categories: Midwest Large; Midwest Midsize; Northeast Large; Northeast Midsize; South Large; South Midsize; West Large; and West Midsize. Overall satisfaction is measured by examining eight core dimensions on a poor-to-perfect 6-point rating scale. Individual dimensions measured are (in order of importance): information provided; level of trust; quality and reliability; ease of doing business; total monthly costs; people; resolving problems or complaints; and digital channels. This year's study is based on the responses of 34,164 residential water utility customers and was conducted from March 2025 through March 2026.

For more information about the U.S. Water Utility Residential Customer Satisfaction Study, visit <https://www.jdpower.com/business/utilities/water-utility-residential-customer-satisfaction-study>.

**About JD Power**

JD Power delivers mission-critical data, analytics and intelligence that help businesses improve customer experience and operational performance with confidence and clarity. Using proprietary, comprehensive data—including millions of consumer interactions and authoritative automotive datasets—combined with advanced analytics, artificial intelligence and deep industry expertise, JD Power enables leaders to respond to market shifts, make smarter decisions and drive measurable performance improvements.

As an objective source of deep insight into real-world customer interactions with brands and products, JD Power provides the independent intelligence organizations need to anticipate change, strengthen customer engagement and advance growth. Learn more at [JDPower.com](https://www.jdpower.com).

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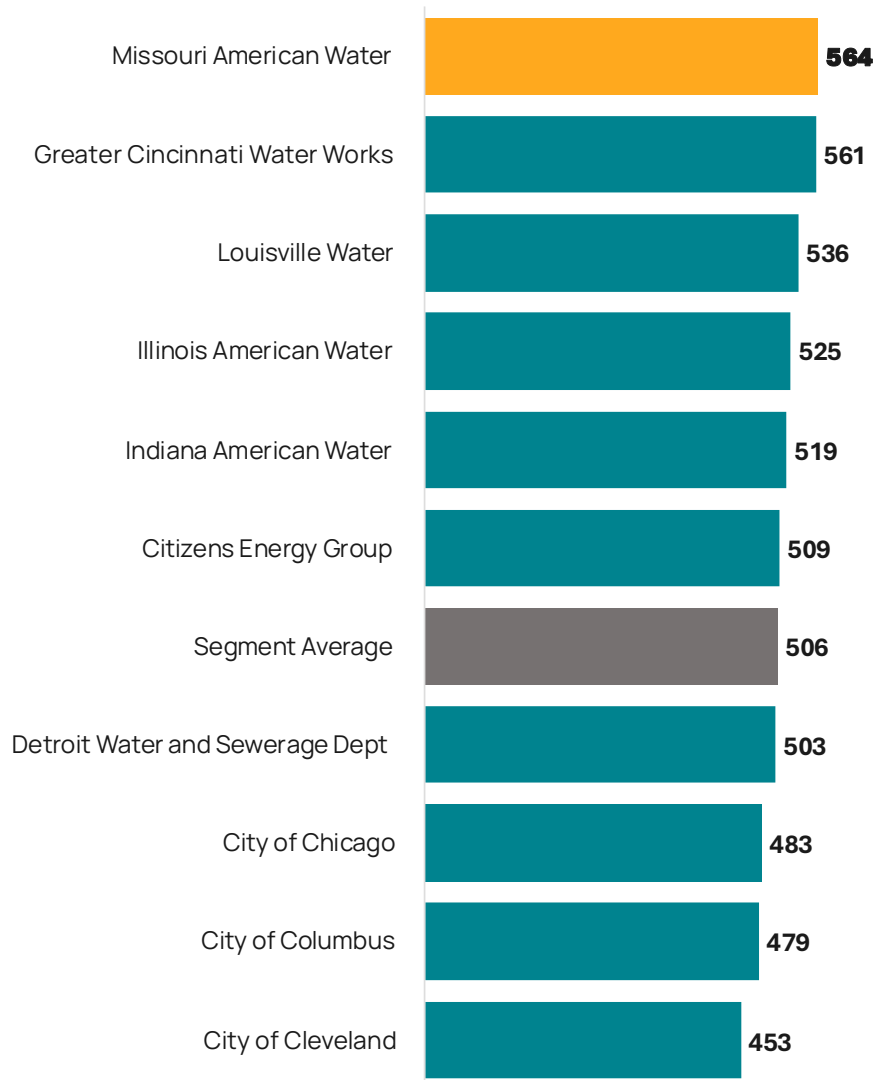
# # #

Note: Eight charts follow.

# JD Power 2026 U.S. Water Utility Residential Customer Satisfaction Study<sup>SM</sup>

Overall Customer Satisfaction Index Ranking  
(Based on a 1,000-point scale)

## MIDWEST - LARGE



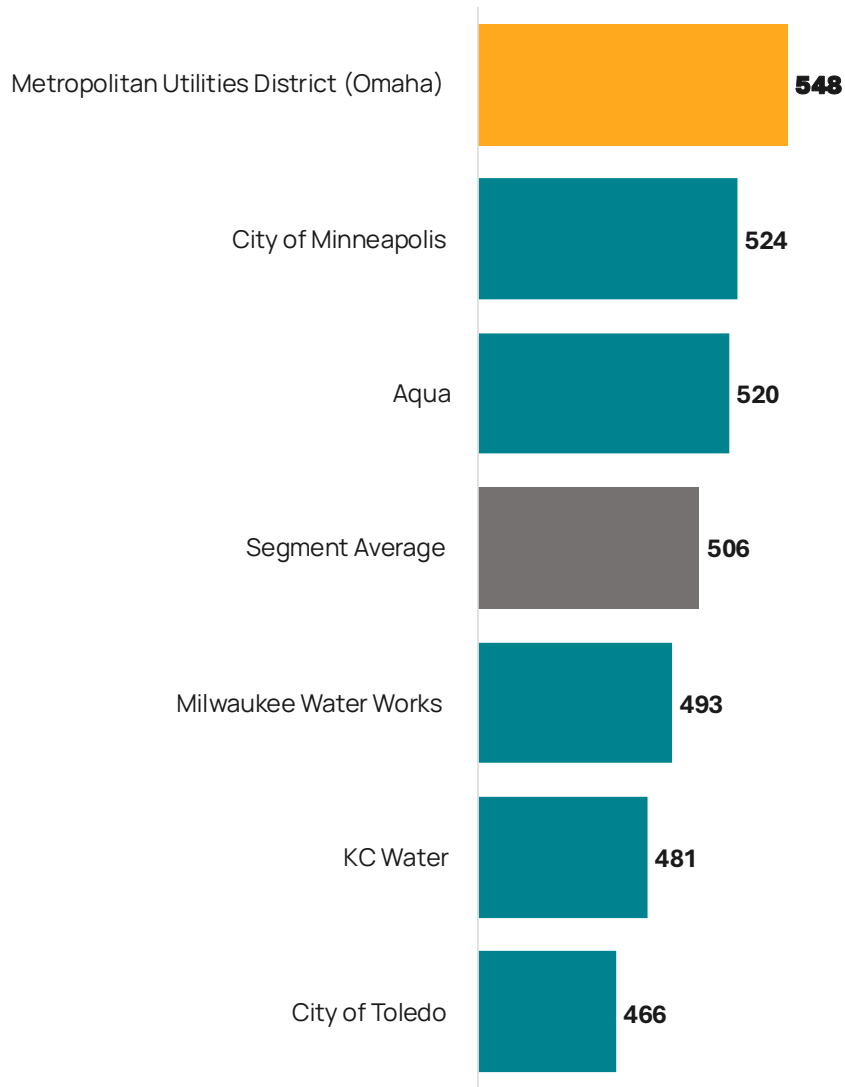
Source: JD Power 2026 U.S. Water Utility Residential Customer Satisfaction Study<sup>SM</sup>

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# JD Power 2026 U.S. Water Utility Residential Customer Satisfaction Study<sup>SM</sup>

Overall Customer Satisfaction Index Ranking  
(Based on a 1,000-point scale)

## MIDWEST - MIDSIZE



Source: JD Power 2026 U.S. Water Utility Residential Customer Satisfaction Study<sup>SM</sup>

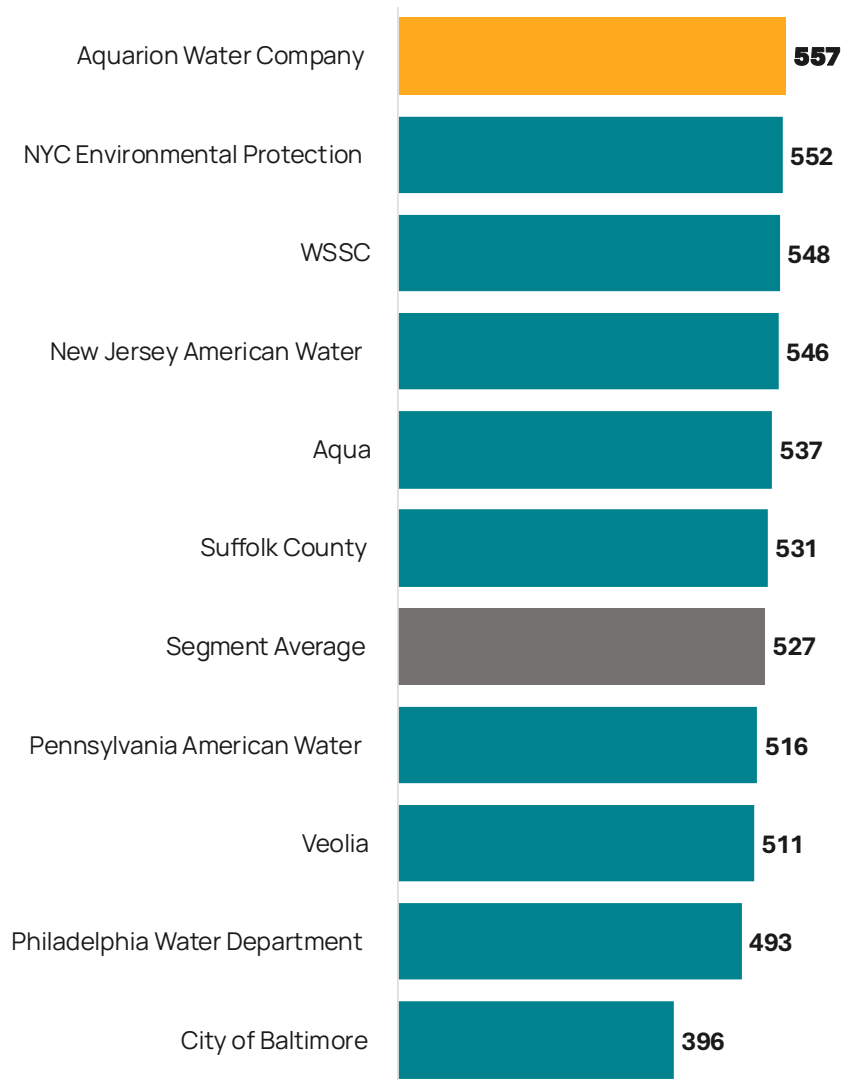
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# JD Power 2026 U.S. Water Utility Residential Customer Satisfaction Study<sup>SM</sup>

Overall Customer Satisfaction Index Ranking

(Based on a 1,000-point scale)

## NORTHEAST – LARGE



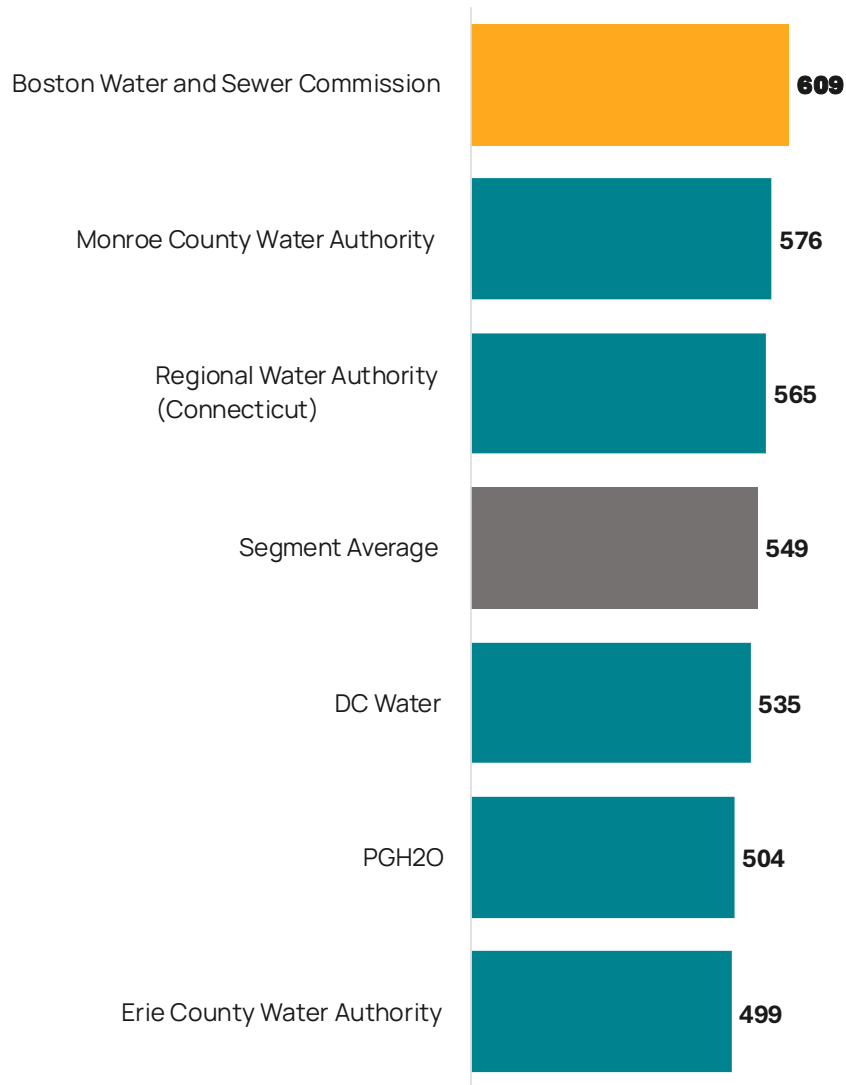
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# JD Power 2026 U.S. Water Utility Residential Customer Satisfaction Study<sup>SM</sup>

Overall Customer Satisfaction Index Ranking  
(Based on a 1,000-point scale)

## NORTHEAST – MIDSIZE



Source: JD Power 2026 U.S. Water Utility Residential Customer Satisfaction Study<sup>SM</sup>

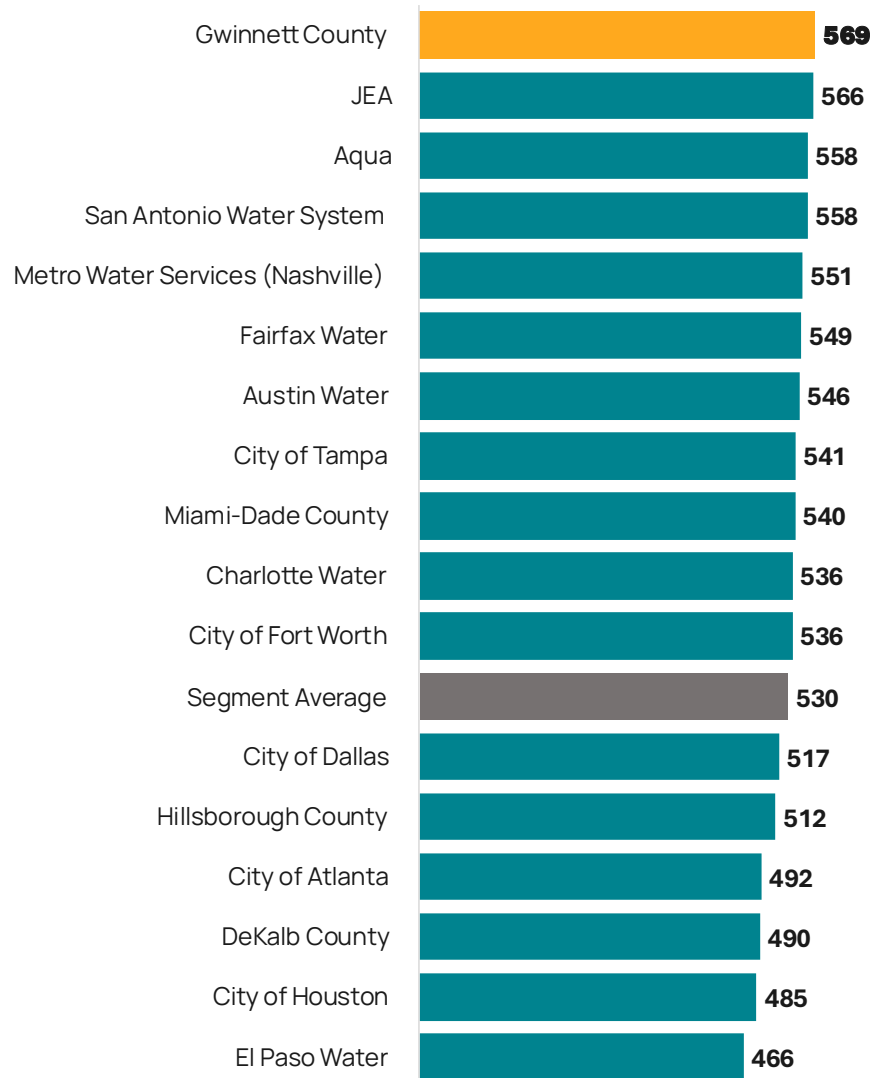
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# JD Power 2026 U.S. Water Utility Residential Customer Satisfaction Study<sup>SM</sup>

Overall Customer Satisfaction Index Ranking

(Based on a 1,000-point scale)

## SOUTH – LARGE



Source: JD Power 2026 U.S. Water Utility Residential Customer Satisfaction Study<sup>SM</sup>

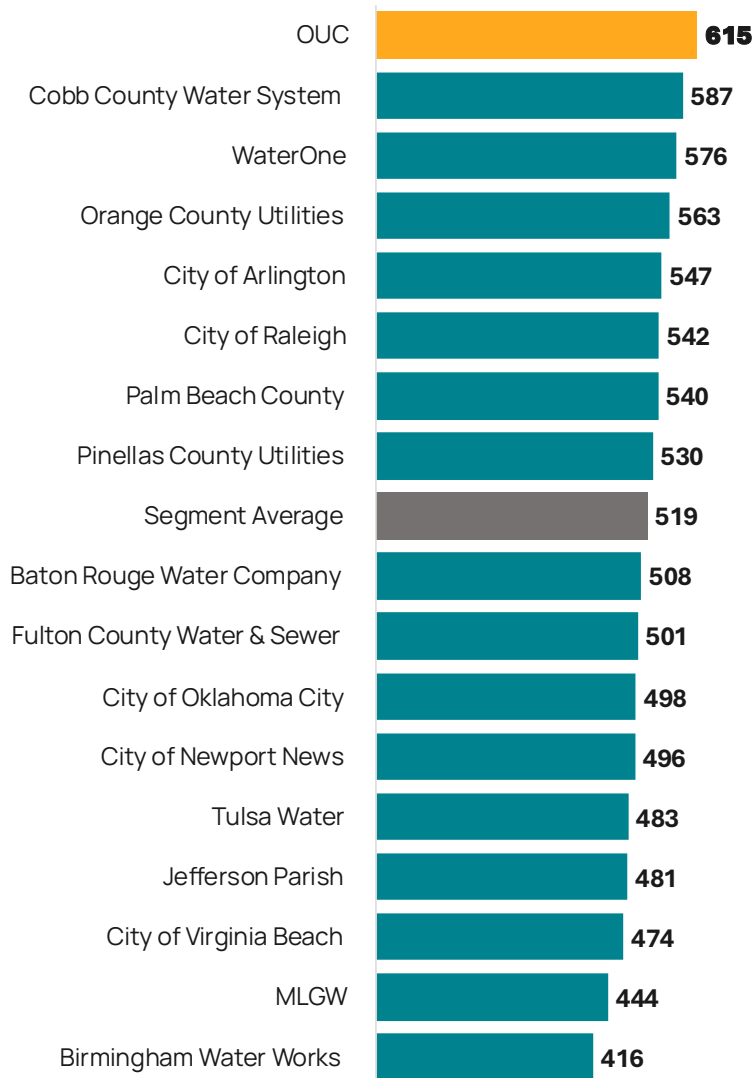
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# JD Power 2026 U.S. Water Utility Residential Customer Satisfaction Study<sup>SM</sup>

Overall Customer Satisfaction Index Ranking

(Based on a 1,000-point scale)

## SOUTH – MIDSIZE



*Note: Birmingham Water Works is now Central Alabama Power.*

Source: JD Power 2026 U.S. Water Utility Residential Customer Satisfaction Study<sup>SM</sup>

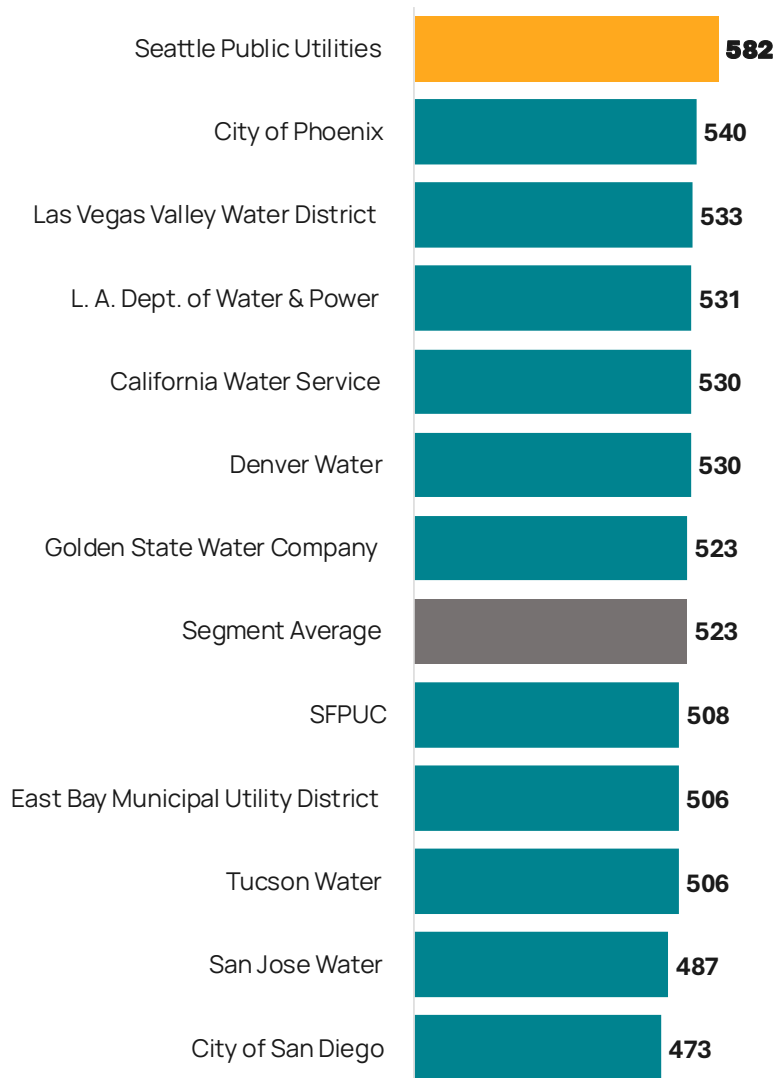
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# JD Power 2026 U.S. Water Utility Residential Customer Satisfaction Study<sup>SM</sup>

Overall Customer Satisfaction Index Ranking

(Based on a 1,000-point scale)

## WEST - LARGE



Source: JD Power 2026 U.S. Water Utility Residential Customer Satisfaction Study<sup>SM</sup>

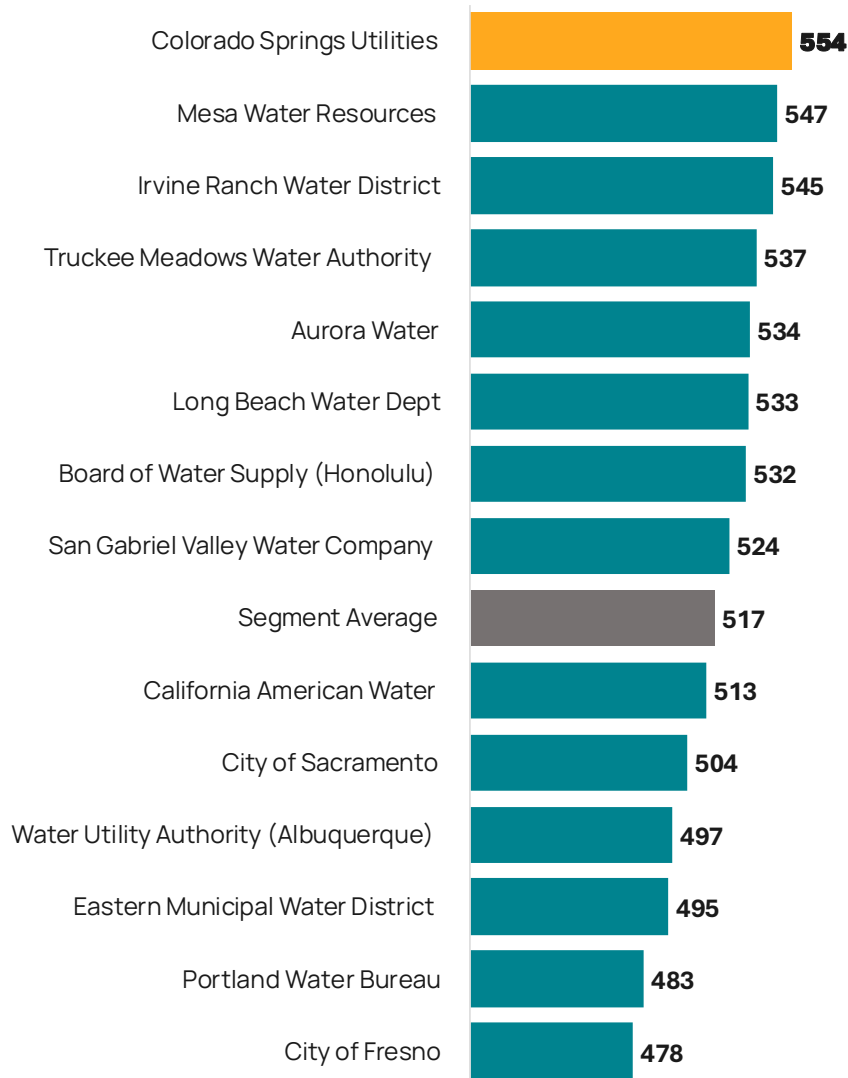
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# JD Power 2026 U.S. Water Utility Residential Customer Satisfaction Study<sup>SM</sup>

Overall Customer Satisfaction Index Ranking

(Based on a 1,000-point scale)

## WEST - MIDSIZE



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