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Report Shares How Electricity Providers Can Improve the Customer Relationship

A new analysis from the nonprofit Smart Energy Consumer Collaborative aims to help energy industry better align programs and strategies with consumers' needs

ATLANTA – March 23, 2023 – Consumers have more opportunities than ever to participate in energy efficiency programs and leverage smart energy technologies, and they generally understand the importance of saving energy at home. However, the consumers that would benefit the most from energy efficiency and clean energy programs still face significant barriers to participation, according to a new report from the [Smart Energy Consumer Collaborative](#) (SECC).

The [“2023 State of the Consumer”](#) report highlights the major themes that emerged from SECC’s 2022 consumer research reports and relevant third-party publications from the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE) and National Energy Assistance Directors Association (NEADA).

In 2022, [SECC’s research](#) included its first consumer segmentation study since the COVID-19 pandemic (the eighth update in the organization’s history), a white paper on optimal utility programs and services for each of the five new consumer segments, and a study on consumers’ understanding of their electric bills and electric rate plan options.

Following overviews of each of these research projects, the new report shares several key themes that summarize what we have learned about energy consumers, including:

- Consumers’ interest in technology has emerged as a major influence in their engagement with energy.
- Consumers understand that energy efficiency can mitigate home energy expenses, but the households that need it the most face the greatest barriers.
- In paying for electricity, consumers value stability, simplicity and transparency – and bills that are easy to understand.

The final section of the report provides suggestions for how electricity providers and other industry stakeholders can deepen their relationships with consumers, such as:

- **Build trust by segmenting your customer base.** One-size-fits-all messaging can erode trust by making consumers feel like their electricity provider is out of touch with their needs. Providers can begin fostering trust with their customers through segmentation based on their values and behaviors.
- **Make the energy bill work harder.** Consumers are accustomed to receiving information and offers tailored to their interests, but many electricity providers are still not using data to improve the customer experience. Providers are particularly missing opportunities to make the monthly bill work harder: it's the one piece of communication likely to get consumers' attention each month.
- **Take the long view and leave no customer behind.** Consumers' needs and interests evolve as they move through life. Electricity providers should connect with customers based on where they are now but understand where they're going and help guide them. Consumers who are less comfortable with technology might need more encouragement; show them how they can take small, incremental steps toward their energy goals.

The "2023 State of the Consumer" report can be downloaded by SECC member organizations [here](#) and is available to the media on request. In addition, SECC's Deputy Director Jason McGrade will host [a one-hour webinar](#) on the report's highlights with ACEEE's Executive Director Steven Nadel on Wednesday, March 29 at 3 p.m. (ET).

To learn more about the Smart Energy Consumer Collaborative, visit www.smartenergycc.org or follow us on [LinkedIn](#). To request information on membership, please complete [this form](#).