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SECC: Energy Affordability and Reliability Take Center Stage for Consumers in 2026

The latest “State of the Consumer” report shares five themes on the utility-customer relationship from more than 5,000 survey responses

ATLANTA – Feb. 19, 2026 – Today, the [Smart Energy Consumer Collaborative](#) (SECC), a nonprofit organization that studies consumer behaviors, interests and concerns in the energy transition, released its [“2026 State of the Consumer”](#) report, which summarizes the findings from more than 5,000 responses to SECC’s nationally representative consumer surveys from 2025.

Last year, [SECC’s research agenda](#) included an update of the organization’s long-running consumer segmentation study, “Consumer Pulse and Market Segmentation – Wave 9,” which also yielded deep dives on Gen Z, low-income consumers and rural consumers, released in the fall as the **Customer Insights Spotlight Series**. The research agenda also included two Smart Energy Snapshot Surveys that focused on solar + storage and energy affordability.

Following an overview of the key findings from these consumer surveys, the “2026 State of the Consumer” report presents five themes on the utility-customer relationship that emerged from the research – insights that can help electricity providers and other industry stakeholders advance customer satisfaction, trust and engagement in 2026.

Foremost among these themes is that affordability is now the universal priority across all consumers. Regardless of income level, generation, consumer segment or technological comfort, energy affordability sits at the top of consumers’ priority lists. While affordability takes center stage, the research also shows that **reliability and resilience remain close behind**.

The remaining three themes in this year’s report highlight consumers’ desire for more guidance and support from their providers, especially around new technologies and programs:

- **Technology interest is high, but digital confidence and adoption vary widely.**
- **Consumers expect providers to play a larger, more supportive role.**
- **Consumers will participate in the clean energy transition – if it’s easy and affordable.**

“This year’s report showcases why affordability and reliability need to be top of mind for all utility leaders in 2026,” said SECC’s President & CEO Nathan Shannon. “Consumers have significant

concerns in both of these areas and are looking for their electricity providers to step up as trusted energy partners.”

Member organizations can download the full “2026 State of the Consumer” report on [SECC’s website here](#). An infographic with high-level insights into how energy affordability concerns are leading to new customer expectations is [also available](#) to both members and the broader industry.

About the Smart Energy Consumer Collaborative (SECC)

The Smart Energy Consumer Collaborative (SECC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that works to learn the wants and needs of energy consumers in North America, encourages the collaborative sharing of best practices in consumer engagement among industry stakeholders, and educates the public about the benefits of smart energy and energy technology. Learn more at smartenergycc.org or follow us on [LinkedIn](#).