



How do utility customers really feel about renewable energy?

By Paige Martin

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Snow and ice storms in the southern US as well as wildfires and blackouts in the West have brought energy consumption, reliability, and resourcing to the forefront. According to the article [A Major Report Warns Climate Change Is Accelerating And Humans Must Cut Emissions Now](#), human-generated emissions of greenhouse gases are the overwhelming cause of the climate crisis.

For some time, utilities have been working on creating a reliable and renewably sourced infrastructure to reduce their carbon footprint and better serve their customers. But only recently are US residents understanding the urgency of the challenge and speaking up. In our report [How do blackouts affect consumers' attitudes toward renewables?](#), we discuss trends related to grid reliability and the effect on renewable-energy opinions. Customers are also curious about where their money is going and how grid investments will affect them personally, a topic we explored in our report [How to communicate the benefits of the smart grid](#). Insights like these can help you better understand your customers and their perceptions so you can communicate with them in ways that resonate.

How are utilities communicating with customers about renewables?

To see examples of how utilities are communicating about renewable energy and infrastructure upgrades to their customers, check out E Source [Energy AdVision](#). Our database contains more than 5,000 examples of utility marketing and advertising campaigns that can inspire your own outreach efforts.

So how do your customers feel about renewable energy? To answer this question, we looked at data from the Claritas Energy Behavior Track, an annual online survey conducted in partnership with E Source of about

32,000 residential customers in the US on a variety of energy-related topics. This data powers the E Source [US Residential Customer Insights Center](#), an easy-to-use online analysis tool that includes a full profile of demographic information (such as gender and age) and household characteristics (such as size of home). It allows utilities to gather information about their residential customers' energy-usage behaviors and attitudes around energy consumption.

Perceptions of renewable energy

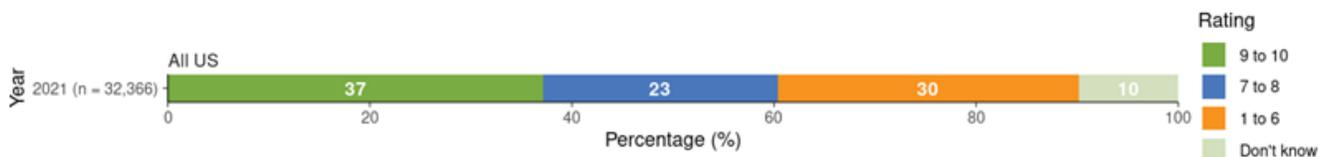
Respondents to our survey have a positive impression of clean energy and support the transition to renewable energy by their utility (**figure 1**). At least one-third of US respondents strongly agreed (rating a 9 or 10 out of 10) that:

- Renewable energy can replace fossil fuels
- Their utility should source more renewable energy
- Solar power will be an important source of electricity in the US in the future

Figure 1: Consumer opinions about renewable energy

Around 37% of US respondents strongly agree that energy generated from renewable energy resources can replace the use of fossil fuels. About 38% of US respondents agree that more of their electric utility's electricity supply should come from renewable energy resources. And almost half of US respondents say they agree that solar power will be an important source of electricity in the future.

Renewable energy should replace fossil fuels



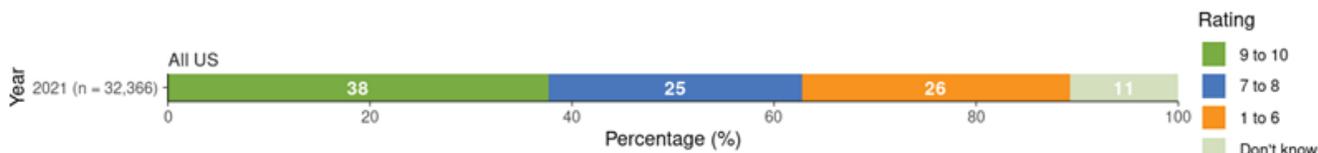
Base: All respondents.

Question C1_2: Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: Energy generated from renewable energy resources (solar, wind) can replace the use of fossil fuels (oil, gas, coal). (Grouped)

Note: Respondents used a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means strongly disagree and 10 means strongly agree. Percentages shown in the charts reflect weighted data; sample sizes (n) are based on unweighted data. Data may not add to 100% due to rounding.

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Utilities should source more renewable energy



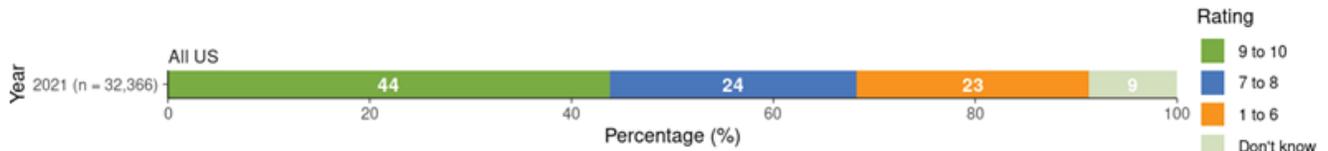
Base: All respondents.

Question C1_3: Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: More of my electric utility's electricity supply should come from renewable energy resources. (Grouped)

Note: Respondents used a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means strongly disagree and 10 means strongly agree. Percentages shown in the charts reflect weighted data; sample sizes (n) are based on unweighted data. Data may not add to 100% due to rounding.

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Solar will be important in the future



Base: All respondents.

Question C1_4: Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: Solar power will be an important source of electricity in the US in the future. (Grouped)

Note: Respondents used a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means strongly disagree and 10 means strongly agree. Percentages shown in the charts reflect weighted data; sample sizes (n) are based on unweighted data.

Data may not add to 100% due to rounding.

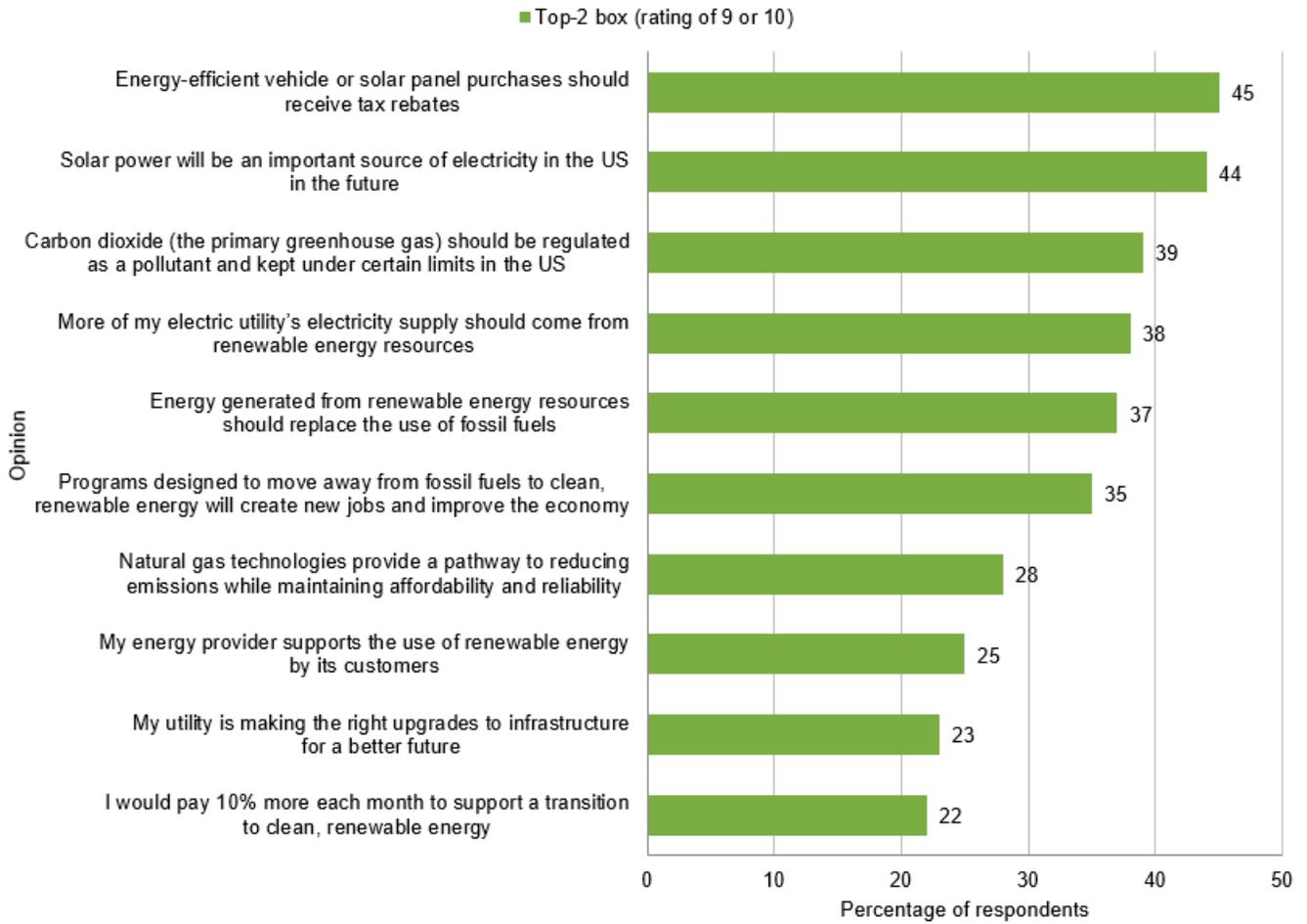
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Investing in a renewable future

While customers support utilities' shift to renewable energy, they don't believe their utility is making the right infrastructure upgrades to support a better, cleaner future. And many customers aren't willing to pay more to support this transition (**figure 2**).

Figure 2: Consumer support for renewable energy

Only 23% of US respondents agree that their utility is making the right upgrades to infrastructure for a better future and only 22% say they would pay more each month to support a transition to clean, renewable energy.



Base: All respondents, n = 32,366. **Question C1:** Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. **Notes:** Respondents used a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means strongly disagree and 10 means strongly agree. Percentages shown in the charts reflect weighted data; sample sizes (n) are based on unweighted data. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. © E Source (2021 Claritas Energy Behavior Track survey)