

# 60

## SECOND GUIDE

# 12%

of customers think energy companies are open and honest about the costs that make up their bills

# 48%

the average customer satisfaction score for utilities suppliers – one of the lowest of all sectors covered by Which? surveys

# 1/4

of customers think energy suppliers are trustworthy – their trust score is lower than that of banks

# 87%

would like billing costs other than energy consumption detailed on their bill

# 218

the number of dual fuel tariffs the average household can choose from

# £270

the average saving when you change energy supplier with Which? Switch

## TOP-RATED ENERGY COMPANIES

### UTILITY WAREHOUSE SCORE 77%

Utility Warehouse, which got the second highest score in the last satisfaction survey, shares the top spot. Operating as a discount club for landline, mobile and broadband as well as energy, its bundled services can provide overall savings and mean most utilities can be covered by one bill. It didn't do as well in its efforts to encourage efficiency, but it got five stars in all other areas.



### OVO ENERGY SCORE 77%

A newcomer to our survey, Ovo Energy shoots straight to joint top on the leader board – despite having less than 18 months' experience in the energy market. Established as an alternative to the big suppliers, Ovo offers two tariffs providing 15% and 100% renewable electricity, and pays 3% interest on any credit balances. One member said: 'The switch to Ovo was seamless and its attitude to customers a welcome change.'



### EBICO SCORE 72%

The UK's only not-for-profit energy supplier proves there is an alternative to the big players in the energy market. Ebico charges all its customers the same rate for gas and electricity, even if you pre-pay or only use one of its services. One member says it's 'the only supplier with a social conscience'. It received five stars in three of the five categories that you rated it on.



### SSE SCORE 56%

With around 10 million customers, Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE) is one of the UK's biggest suppliers and historically the best performing of the big six in our survey. Around one in five of you use SSE. It didn't do as well for its efforts to encourage energy efficiency; some couldn't recall getting any advice and one said that occasional leaflets contained 'nothing proactive'.



### EON SCORE 49%

Just under a fifth of you use Eon and have awarded it a customer score of 49%, compared with 39% a year ago. With the highest rating of the big six for encouraging efficiency, Eon was rated well in most categories, but got average results for customer service and telephone support. Eon has a large range of different tariffs, but some find it hard to get hold of a human for support.



### SCOTTISH POWER SCORE 46%

With the joint lowest rating for encouraging efficiency, Scottish Power scraped a narrow lead over British Gas for its customer score. Respect for the environment is one of its 'big goals', but one member commented that it just 'pays lip service' to energy efficiency. Others found the number of tariffs makes it hard to see whether you're getting a good deal.



## OUR RESEARCH

In October 2010, we surveyed 8,421 members of the Which? Connect online community (see p58) about their energy suppliers. Scores are based on overall satisfaction and likelihood of

recommending to a friend. Northern Ireland Electricity's score is based only on satisfaction.

We also surveyed 2,004 bill-paying UK adults about the costs that make up their energy bills.

# AND THE REST...

## BRITISH GAS SCORE 45%

A fifth of respondents use British Gas, the supplier that provides around half of the UK's domestic gas.

Despite achieving a customer score of 45%, compared with 37% a year ago, British Gas has the joint lowest rating for its telephone support and is rated average in most other areas. Several members complained of slow staff that don't care or listen – one said it was like 'banging your head against a brick wall.'



## FIRST UTILITY SCORE 43%

First Utility's debut in our survey leaves a lot to be desired. It received the worst rating for online support and dealing with queries – and joint lowest for telephone support and encouraging efficiency. Known in one member's home as 'Futility', it was also described as 'shambolic', 'shocking' and 'atrocious'. Members cited overcharging and price hikes shortly after signing up to tariffs as causes of frustration.



## EDF SCORE 40%

EDF generates around a fifth of the UK's energy and supplies one in ten Which? members. It received average ratings, but the second lowest customer score of the big six. Commenting on bills, one member said: 'How could something so simple be made to look so complicated? It's hard enough to work out if you are in credit or debit.' Others say they are annoyed at not being told about cheaper tariffs.



## NPOWER SCORE 34%

Continuing a sorry trend, Npower once again gets the worst customer score and one of the lowest ratings for customer service and value for money. One customer was so enraged they took Npower to court for behaviour its own lawyer described as 'abominable'. In our survey, Npower was slammed by one member for 'over-estimated and unrealistic rises in monthly payments'.



## NORTHERN IRELAND ELECTRICITY SCORE 34%\*

Northern Ireland Electricity's score is based purely on customer satisfaction. That's because it was, until recently, the sole supplier of electricity in Northern Ireland, so we couldn't take into account how likely people would be to recommend it. This would possibly impact on its score.



## WHICH? SWITCH AND SAVE

It takes no time at all to compare energy suppliers and switch tariffs using Which? Switch. It then takes six to eight weeks for the switch to be completed, but your new supplier will sort out the details. Which? Switch also has advice on what your energy bill shows and what it really means. And we show you how to complain about shoddy service. Visit [www.which.co.uk/switch](http://www.which.co.uk/switch) to see where you can make some savings.

SUPPLIER	WHICH? RATINGS										
	UNDERSTANDING	BILLS - ACCURACY	BILLS - SERVICE	CUSTOMER SERVICE	ENCOURAGING EFFICIENCY	VALUE FOR MONEY	SUPPORT	ONLINE SUPPORT	TELEPHONE SUPPORT	DEALING WITH QUERIES	CUSTOMER SCORE (%)
1 <b>UTILITY WAREHOUSE</b> (185)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	<b>77%</b>
2 <b>OVO ENERGY</b> (93)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	n/a	★★★★★	<b>77%</b>
3 <b>EBICO</b> (46)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	n/a	n/a	n/a	<b>72%</b>
4 <b>SSE</b> (1,516)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	<b>56%</b>
5 <b>EON</b> (1,619)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	<b>49%</b>
6 <b>SCOTTISH POWER</b> (1,117)	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★	<b>46%</b>
7 <b>BRITISH GAS</b> (1,860)	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★	★★	★★★	<b>45%</b>
8 <b>FIRST UTILITY</b> (173)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★	★★★★	★★	★★	★★	★	<b>43%</b>
9 <b>EDF</b> (888)	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★	<b>40%</b>
10 <b>NPOWER</b> (644)	★★	★★★	★★★	★★	★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★	★★	★★★	<b>34%</b>
11 <b>NORTHERN IRELAND ELECTRICITY</b> (73)											<b>34%*</b>

\*NIE's score doesn't include the likelihood of recommending the supplier and is based on satisfaction only. Sample size is in brackets. n/a means there were insufficient responses to rate the supplier. Online support is speed of correspondence, ease of finding your way around its website, understanding your needs and politeness of correspondence. Telephone support is time taken to get through, ease of automated service, understanding your needs and politeness of call centre staff.