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ESA # 7012854

2019/2020 Small Business Customer Survey

Wellington North Power Inc. (WNP) conducted a survey of its Small Business customers (rate-class General Service <50kW). The survey questions were prepared by WNP and were available to customers to complete by:

- Accessing using the LDC's website.
- Accessing on-line through Survey Monkey.
- Available at the office counter for walk-in customers.

Survey Objective

The intent of the survey was to capture customers' feedback to assist WNP with business planning for the period 2021 to 2025. The responses will help provide an insight into the services offered by WNP as well better understand the needs and preferences of our customers.

Survey Questions

Survey questions focused on the following themes:

1. Satisfaction;
2. Rating of Service Provided;
3. Power outages;
4. Effectiveness during an Outage;
5. Company profile;
6. Investment priorities;
7. Price and reliability; and
8. Trust.

The Small Business customer survey ran from October 4th 2019 to January 31st 2020.

Survey Promotion

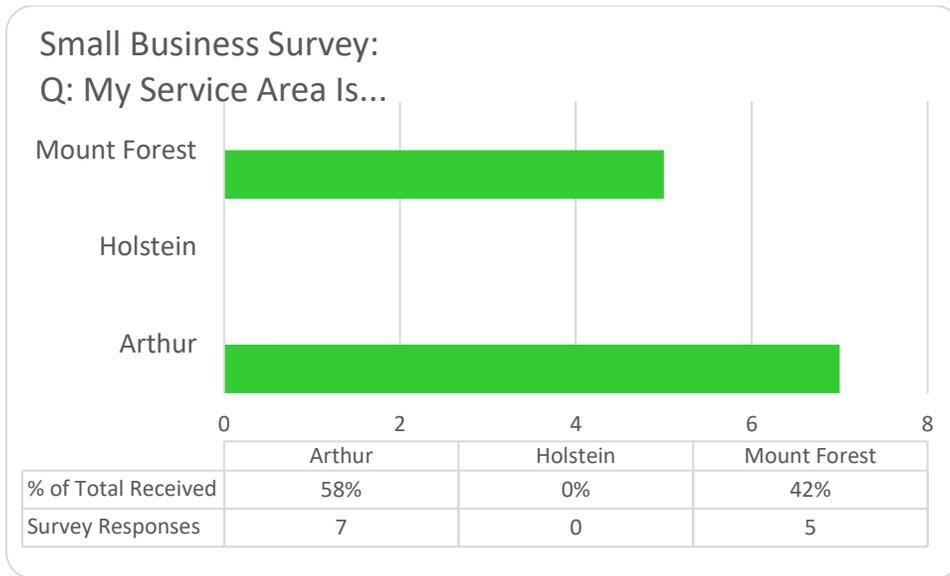
WNP promoted the survey through the following channels:

- a) Bill inserts included with October, November and December bills.
- b) Messages on customers' e-bill for bills issued in October, November and December.
- c) Promoted on Wellington North Power's website.
- d) Weekly messages posted on social media (Facebook and Twitter).
- e) Walk-in customer visits to the LDC's office.
- f) Notices posted at the Arthur Chamber of Commerce.

Survey Responses

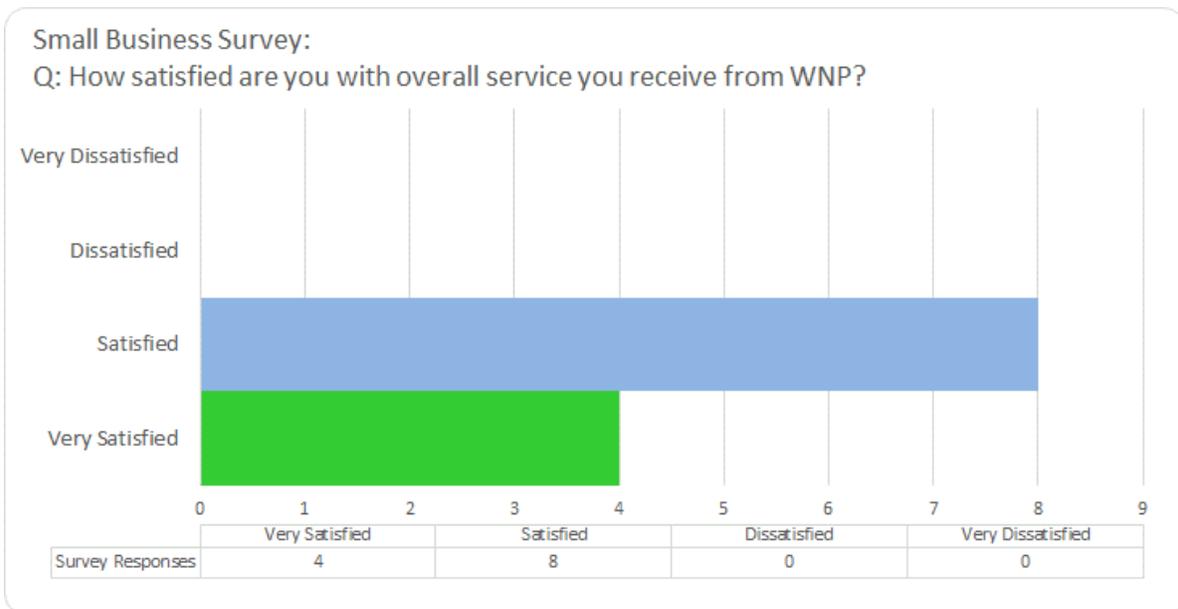
WNP received survey responses from only 12 Small Business customers. With 476 Small Business accounts as at December 31st 2019 this represents a 3% response-rate. The LDC acknowledges this response rate is not statistically significant; however the responses do provide valuable feedback to how our customers perceive the services offered by Wellington North Power and assist in preparing capital plans and operating budgets.

WNP operates within three (3) service areas in Wellington North in the urban centers of Arthur, Holsten and Mount Forest. The chart below shows the survey responses received split by the service area:



1. Satisfaction

The chart below summarizes how Small Business respondents rate the overall service provided by WNP:

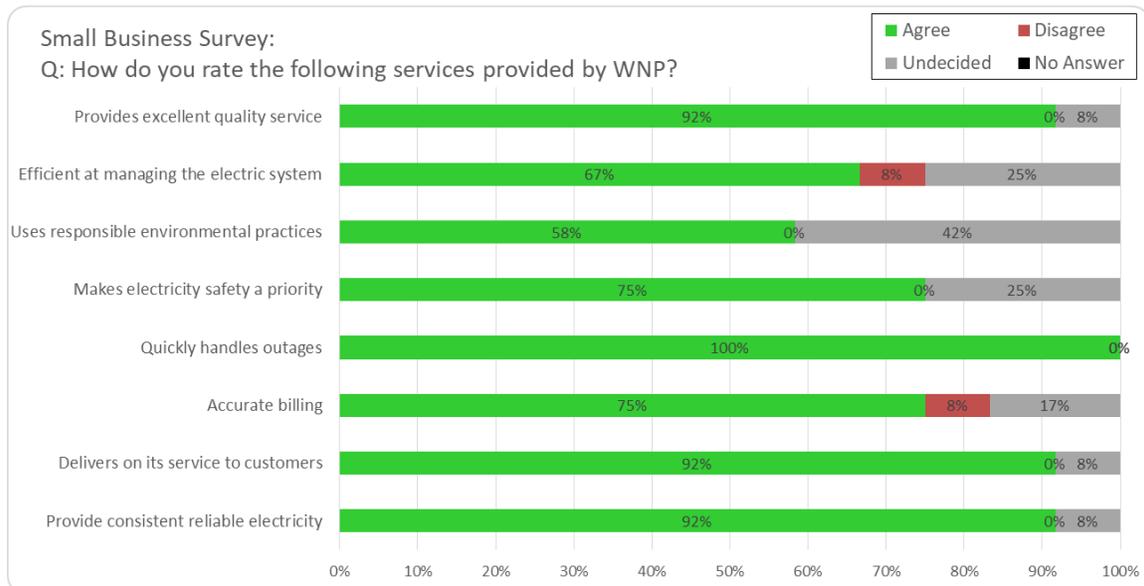


Findings:

- 100% of respondents rated WNP overall service as either “Very Satisfied” or “Satisfied”.

2. Service Rating

Customers were given a series of statements and asked if they “Agree”, “Disagree” or were “Undecided” with each statement. The chart below shows the collated responses:



Statement	Agree	Disagree	Undecided	No Answer	Total
Provide consistent reliable electricity	92%	0%	8%	0%	100%
Delivers on its service to customers	92%	0%	8%	0%	100%
Accurate billing	75%	8%	17%	0%	100%
Quickly handles outages	100%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Makes electricity safety a priority	75%	0%	25%	0%	100%
Uses responsible environmental practices	58%	0%	42%	0%	100%
Efficient at managing the electric system	67%	8%	25%	0%	100%
Provides excellent quality service	92%	0%	8%	0%	100%

Findings:

- 100% of respondents agreed that WNP handles power outages quickly.
- 8% (1 respondent) disagreed with the statements that WNP provided accurate billing and the LDC was efficient at managing the electric system.
- Reliability, service delivery and quality of service were all rated as “Agreed” by 92% of the response population (11 respondents).
- Responses for environmental practices, accurate billing, efficiently manages the electric system, and safety as a priority all achieved an “Undecided” response for over 10% of the respondents (i.e. more than 1 respondent).

For consideration:

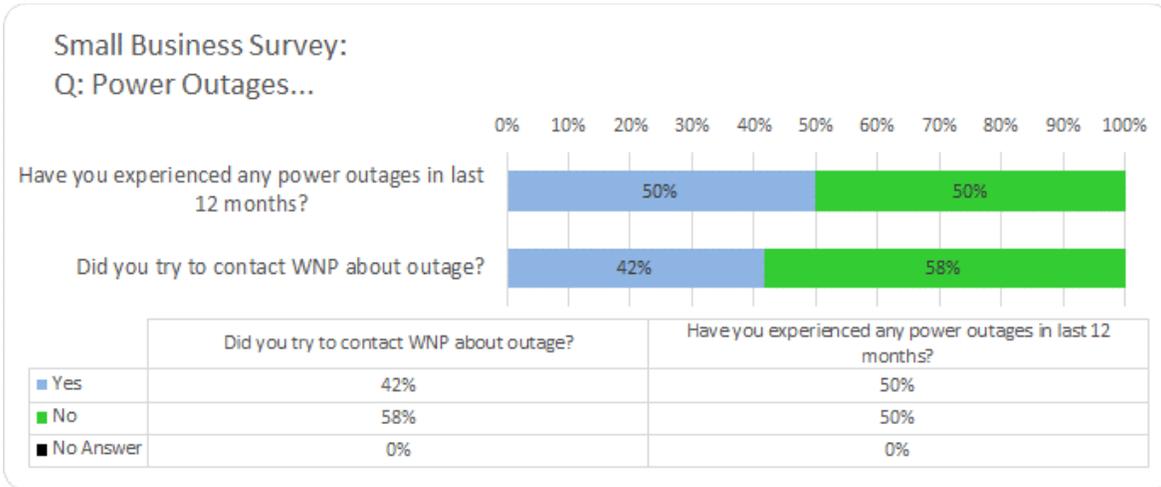
WNP needs to assess how the LDC can better communicate to customers items such as environmental practices and examples of efficient handling of the electricity system. For instance, publishing articles on these items in the local newspaper on a quarterly basis.

3. Power Outages

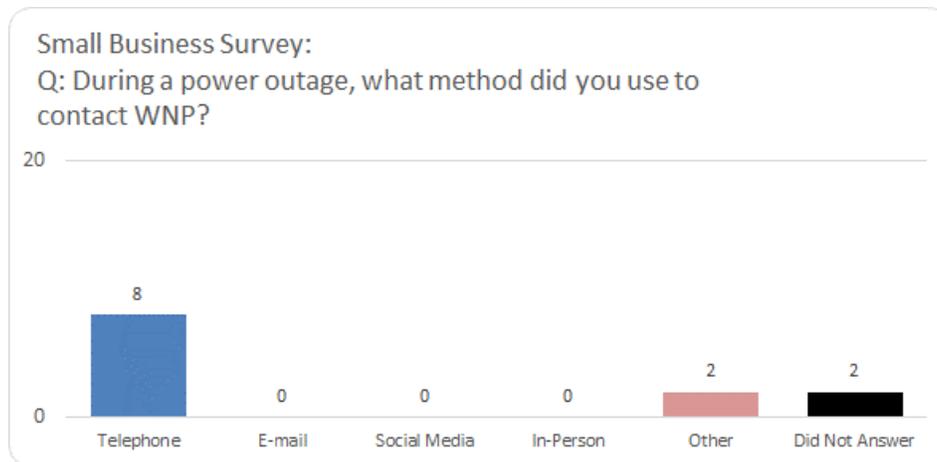
This question asked if customers had experienced a power outage in the past 12 months and, during the outage, had they tried to contact WNP.

Findings:

50% of respondents had experienced a power outage during the last 12 months with 42% trying to contact WNP during the outage:



During an outage, 8 respondents (67% of the survey population) tried to contact WNP using the telephone whilst 2 people (16%) used an “Other” method of communication:



During business hours, all telephone calls to WNP are live-answered by a Customer Service Representative. The LDC’s office has a back-up generator that means that telephone equipment and customer-service systems are not affected during an outage. Outside of business hours, telephone calls are managed by third-party after-hours service provider, who will forward emergency messages to the On-Call line-men during a power outage.

WNP updates its website with power outage information (such as areas affected, current status and restoration times if known.) The LDC also posts the same information on social media sites (Facebook and Twitter).

For consideration:

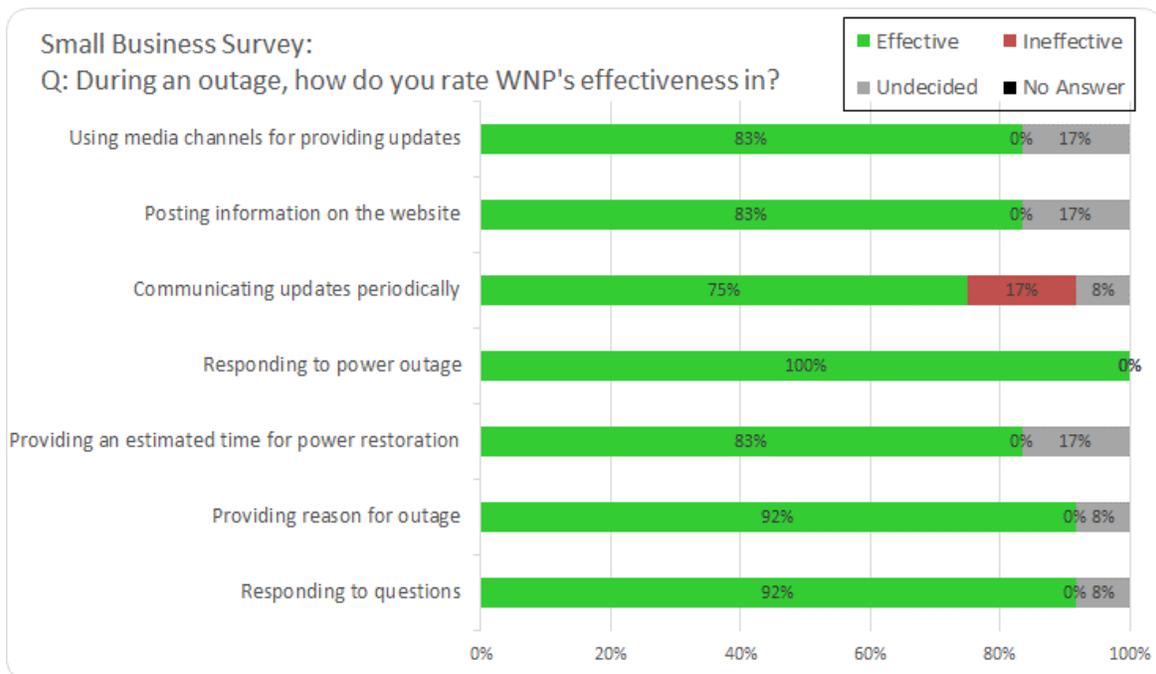
It would be interesting to know what the “Other” communication method is that 2 respondents have used; maybe, in future surveys, this question needs to include “open-text” for customers to name their communication method or preference.

4. Effectiveness during an Outage

This question asked, during an outage, how effective WNP was not only in responding to the outage but also providing information to customers. Against a seven of statements, customers could select “Effective”, “Ineffective” or “Undecided”.

Findings:

- 100% of respondents agreed that WNP is effective in responding to power outages
- The lowest score related to 75% of respondents rating WNP being effective in communicating updates periodically. And, 17% (2 respondents) rated WNP as being ineffective for this statement.
- The remaining statements all scored favourable with 83%+ of respondents rating WNP being effective in these areas.



For information:

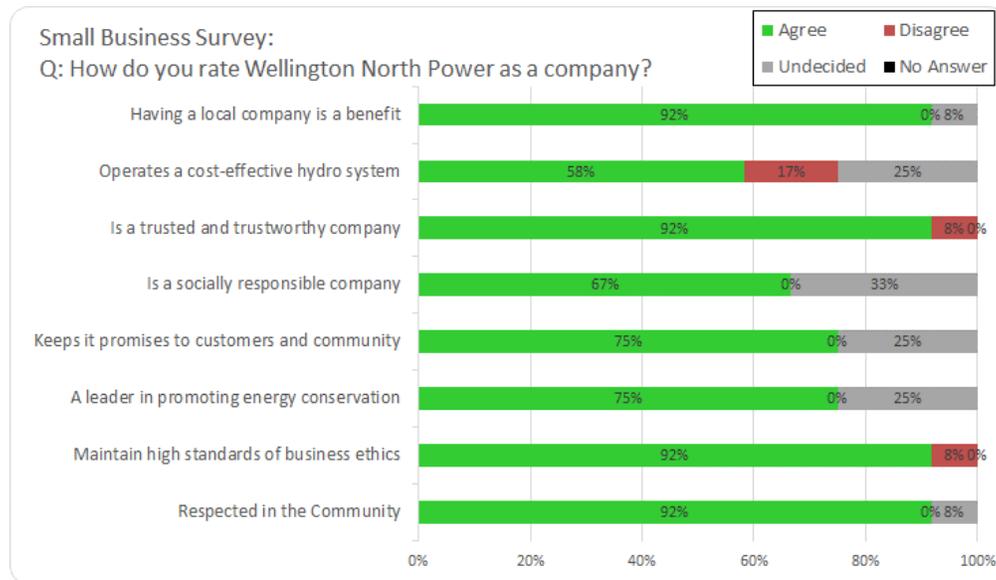
During an outage, WNP posts the information on its social media pages and website. WNP's website will also show a notice advising there is an outage, where the outage is (i.e. naming the urban area of Arthur, Holstein or Mount Forest) as well as the social media thread conversation. WNP communicates information typically on an hourly basis unless there is no factual information to share (e.g. a restoration time). As the LDC is embedded, it is often reliant on Hydro One passing along information that WNP can share with its customers. WNP is careful what information it shares with customers as we do not want to share incorrect or unconfirmed information.

For consideration:

Perhaps WNP should consider posting information every 30 minutes during an outage, even if it is to advise the outage is still on-going and crews are still assessing.

5. Company Profile

This question considered how customers felt about WNP. Customers were provided with a series of statements enabling respondents to choose either “Agree”, “Disagree” or “Undecided” with each statement. The chart below shows the collated responses:



Findings:

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Undecided	No Answer
Respected in the Community	92%	0%	8%	0%
Maintain high standards of business ethics	92%	8%	0%	0%
A leader in promoting energy conservation	75%	0%	25%	0%
Keeps its promises to customers and community	75%	0%	25%	0%
Is a socially responsible company	67%	0%	33%	0%
Is a trusted and trustworthy company	92%	8%	0%	0%
Operates a cost-effective hydro system	58%	17%	25%	0%
Having a local company is a benefit	92%	0%	8%	0%

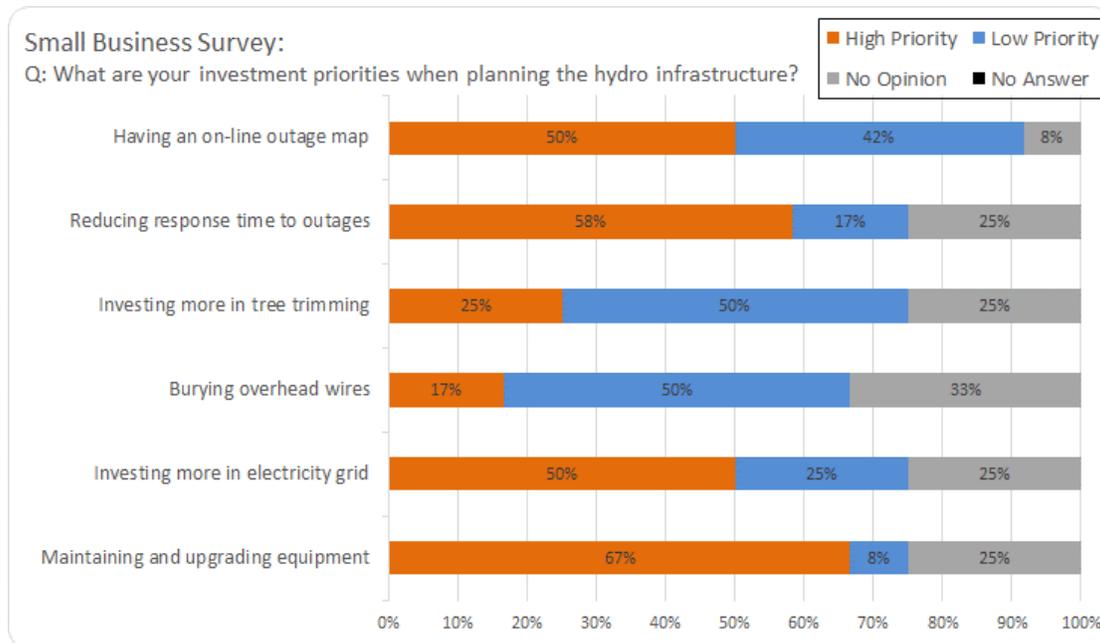
- 92% of the survey population agreed that WNP is a trusted company, is respected in the community and has high standards of business ethics.
- 58% of the survey population agreed WNP operates a cost-effective hydro system. For this statement, 25% of respondents were “undecided” and 17% (2 people) “disagreed”.
- As a leader in promoting energy conservation, 75% agreed with this statement; however 25% were undecided. In March 2019 the government announced that energy conservation was to be centrally-delivered by the IESO, rather than by LDCs. Although WNP supports energy conservation, from March 2019, the LDC has reduced its’ efforts in promoting energy conservation (i.e. less social-media posting about energy savings programs and no hosting of CDM stands at local community events).

For consideration:

- a) An article in the local newspaper each quarter about capital projects completed and future plans which could make reference to being social-responsible (i.e. safe disposal of oil-filled transformers).
- b) An annual meeting for small business customers, held in the evening after business hours to present proposed operating budgets and capital investment plans. This may help inform our customers about what options were explored, why investment is needed and how the LDC is being cost-effective for stakeholders’ needs today and for the future.
- c) Present information at Chamber of Commerce meetings.

6. Investment Priorities

This question sought customers' opinions about how WNP should invest. Customers were provided with a series of statements enabling respondents to choose either "High Priority", "Low Priority" or "No Opinion" with each statement. The chart below shows the collated responses:



Findings:

Statement	High Priority	Low Priority	No Opinion	No Answer
Maintaining and upgrading equipment	67%	8%	25%	0%
Investing more in electricity grid	50%	25%	25%	0%
Burying overhead wires	17%	50%	33%	0%
Investing more in tree trimming	25%	50%	25%	0%
Reducing response time to outages	58%	17%	25%	0%
Having an on-line outage map	50%	42%	8%	0%

- "Maintaining and upgrading equipment" was the most popular "high priority" of all the statements provided. 67% of the survey population rated this as a high priority whereas 8% rated it as "low priority". (25% or 3 respondents had no opinion about this item).
- "Burying overhead wires" was the lowest "high priority" as rated by 17% of the respondents.
- "Reducing response time to power outages" was the 2nd highest priority with 58% of respondents rating this as a high priority item.

For consideration:

Respondents rated "maintaining and upgrading equipment" as the highest priority of all the statements. WNP needs to continue with its capital investment that maintains the reliability of the distribution system at a pace that does not excessively increase hydro-rates year-over-year. Capital investment planning is through good asset condition assessment programs that will assist in making informed asset replacement priority decisions.

7. Price and Reliability

This question asked customers to rate five statements from 1 being most important to 5 being of least important to them. The statements were:

- Pay lower electricity rates with reduced reliability.
- Pay higher electricity rates with increased reliability.
- Increase spending to accommodate grid modernization.
- Pay higher electricity rates to pay for burying cables.
- Continue with current investment spending levels to balance electricity reliability and rates.

Findings:

The table below shows the results as a percentage of all responses received:

Statement	Most Important 					Least Important	No Answer	Total
	1	2	3	4	5			
Pay lower electricity rates with reduced reliability	25%	8%	42%	8%	17%	0%	100%	
Pay higher electricity rates with increased reliability	0%	8%	42%	33%	17%	0%	100%	
Increase spending to accommodate grid modernization	8%	25%	42%	17%	8%	0%	100%	
Pay higher electricity rates to pay for burying cables	0%	0%	17%	33%	50%	0%	100%	
Continue with current investment spending levels to balance electricity reliability and rates	42%	17%	17%	25%	0%	0%	100%	

The table below shows the results by the number of survey respondents:

Statement	Most Important 					Least Important	No Answer	Total
	1	2	3	4	5			
Pay lower electricity rates with reduced reliability	3	1	5	1	2	0	12	
Pay higher electricity rates with increased reliability	0	1	5	4	2	0	12	
Increase spending to accommodate grid modernization	1	3	5	2	1	0	12	
Pay higher electricity rates to pay for burying cables	0	0	2	4	6	0	12	
Continue with current investment spending levels to balance electricity reliability and rates	5	2	2	3	0	0	12	

- “Continue with current investment spending levels to balance electricity reliability and rates” statement was ranked as the highest “most important” score of all statements (rated as high important by 42% of respondents).
- “Pay higher electricity rates to pay for burying cables” was rated as the “least important” statement with 50% of respondents scoring this with a “5”.
- Slightly more people rated paying “lower electricity rates with reduced reliability” as a higher important priority compared to those that scored it as a most important (i.e. 25% compared to 17%); however 42% (5 respondents) rated this statement with neutral importance (i.e. a rating of 3).

For consideration:

In preparing its capital plans and setting operating budgets, based upon the survey result, WNP should continue with current investment spending levels to balance electricity reliability and rates.

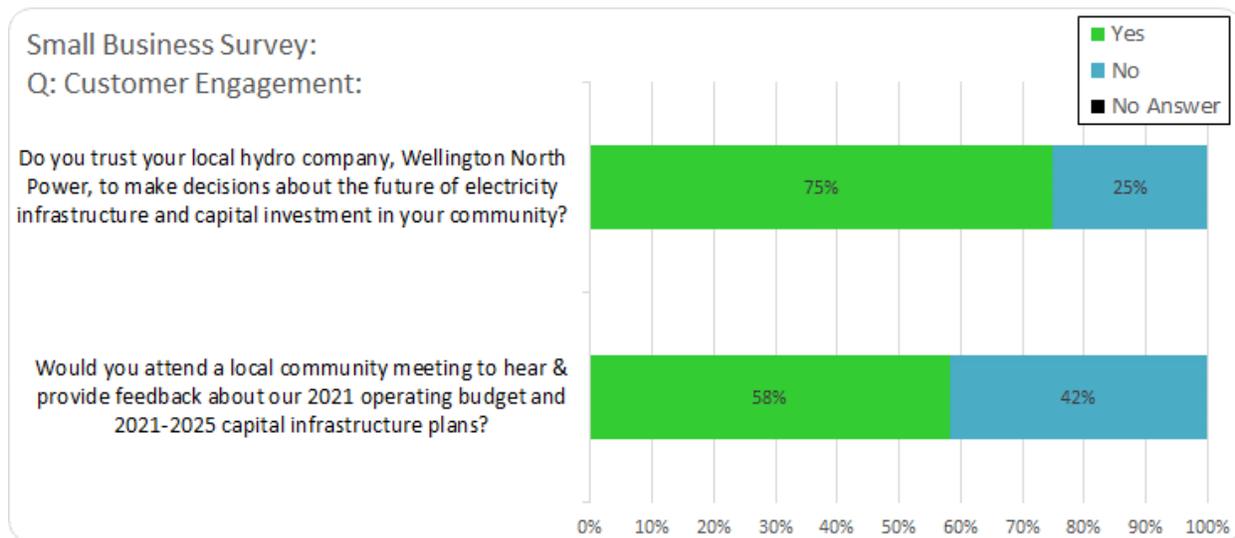
8. Trust

This question asked if WNP's customers:

- Trusted their local hydro company to make decisions about electricity infrastructure and capital investments.
- Interested in attending a community open house to provide feedback concerning WNP's 2021 operating budget and 5-year capital investment plan for 2021-2025.

Findings:

- 75% of respondents did trust their local hydro company, WNP, to make decisions concerning the electricity infrastructure.
- 58% of respondents (9 out of 12 responses) would be interested in attending a community meeting.



For consideration:

WNP appreciates and acknowledges the trust bestowed on the LDC by its customers. Wellington North Power Inc. has been serving the community for over 100 years and is committed to continuing to provide outstanding service to its customers and stakeholders.

Given the response from the Small Business customers who participated in the survey, WNP should consider hosting a community meeting to enable customers to hear about and be involved in WNP's 2021 operating budget and capital investment plans.

For consideration:

WNP will share the survey results, including customer comments, with employees and directors. This information will assist the LDC with its planning and budget processes as well as determining customers' needs and preferences for today and the future.