2012 PRE AND POST SURVEY
OF DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
RESIDENTS AGE 50+ ON UTILITIES

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Survey Highlights

AARP’s District of Columbia Office in response to its commitment to ensure affordable electric rates and consumer protections for all residents commissioned two surveys to explore the views of residents age 50+ regarding utility affordability, smart meters, power restoration following outages, and consumer protections. This report discusses the findings of both surveys.

Like many others around the country, residents in The District of Columbia are concerned with the rising costs of heating and cooling their homes. When utility companies propose rate increases, consumers want their interest protected.

- The results of this survey show that residents in the District of Columbia age 50 and older are concerned about the rising costs of heating and cooling their homes. In addition, about one-half feel they are paying too much for electricity.

- With regard to some of the remote features of the smart meter technology, more than one-half of residents oppose the utility company making rate plans mandatory. In addition, about three-quarters of District of Columbia residents are opposed to the utility company disconnecting service remotely without a home visit to notify the customer. This opposition remained stable between the two surveys.

- The District of Columbia Public Service Commission has since implemented certain regulatory standards to protect consumers. These new reliability standards seek to reduce the length and frequency of outages. More than seven in ten District of Columbia residents report that electric companies should be penalized if they fail to meet the new reliability standard measures or should be fined if they do not restore power within a reasonable time frame.

- Additionally, nearly two-thirds oppose a $39.7 million rate increase by Pepco for the purposes of improving reliability and replacing aging technology.
AARP’s District of Columbia Office in response to its commitment to ensure affordable electric rates and consumer protections for all residents commissioned two surveys to explore the views of residents age 50+ regarding utility affordability, smart meters, power restoration following outages, and consumer protections.

The first telephone survey was fielded from March 15 to March 23, 2012. A total of 800 interviews were completed yielding a margin of error of ±3.5. The second telephone survey was fielded from December 1, 2012 to December 6, 2012. A total of 500 interviews were completed yielding a margin of error of ±4.4. The weighted, annotated survey of responses begins on page 4.

**Survey-in-Brief**

The results of this survey show that residents in the District of Columbia age 50 and older are concerned about the rising costs of heating and cooling their homes. In addition, about one-half feel they are paying too much for electricity.

![Concern About Electricity Costs Going Up](chart)

Recently, residents in the District of Columbia had smart meters installed in their homes. One of the features of the smart meters is that the technology tracks electricity based on the time that residents use it. This allows the utility company to offer customers pricing plans which typically charge higher rates for peak usage times. Another feature of the remote technology is it allows the utility company to remotely connect and disconnect service. District of Columbia residents are well aware that smart meters have been installed in their homes.
With regard to some of the remote features of the technology, more than one-half of residents oppose the utility company making rate plans mandatory. In addition, about three-quarters of District of Columbia residents are opposed to the utility company disconnecting service remotely without a home visit to notify the customer. This opposition remained stable between the two surveys.

Support or Opposition to Making Rate Plans Mandatory—Asked March 2012
n=800

Support or Opposition to Remote Disconnections Without a Home Visit
Mar-12 (n=800)
Dec-12 (n=500)

About 55 percent of District of Columbia resident’s surveyed lost power at some time in 2011, and 73 percent say they or someone they know lost power in the January 2011 storm. The District of Columbia Public Service Commission has since implemented certain regulatory standards to protect consumers. These new reliability standards seek to reduce the length and frequency of outages. Additionally, electricity companies are required to submit a Major Storm Power Outage Plan to prevent outages and improve restoration of power to customers. More than seven in ten District of Columbia residents report that electric companies should be penalized if they fail to meet the new reliability standard measures or should be fined if they do not restore power within a reasonable time frame.

Should Electric Companies be Penalized for not Meeting Reliability Standards—Asked December 2012 (n=500)

Should Electric Companies be Fined for not Restoring Power Within a Reasonable Time Frame—Asked December 2012 (n=500)
More than one-half of residents surveyed say the District of Columbia government is not doing enough to help people affected by rising electricity costs. They also do not believe that the interests of residential utility customers are represented and taken into consideration when rate increases are proposed.

Additionally, nearly two-thirds oppose a $39.7 million rate increase by Pepco for the purposes of improving reliability and replacing aging technology.
**Methodology**

AARP commissioned RDD Field Services to conduct the 2012 District of Columbia Utility Survey, a survey of District of Columbia residents age 50 and over. Two surveys were conducted. The first was conducted between March 1 and March 7, 2012. A total of 800 interviews were completed which garnered a margin of error of plus or minus 3.5 percent at a 95 percent confidence level.

The second survey was conducted between December 1, 2012 and December 6, 2012, and a total of 500 interviews were completed. A sample of this size has a sampling error of plus or minus 4.4 percent at a 95 percent confidence level. Survey responses were weighted to reflect the actual distribution of age and gender of District of Columbia residents 50 years or older. Interviewing was completed with a final response rate of 5.26 percent, cooperation rate of 47.26 percent and refusal rate of 10.97 percent. The response, cooperation, and refusal rates were calculated according to AAPOR standards RR3, COOP3, and REF3.

The percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding. Also due to rounding, the percentages reported in the text may vary slightly from those in the annotation or in graphs.
Hello, this is _________ calling from ____________, a national opinion research firm. We are not telemarketers and are not trying to sell you anything. We are interested in your opinions on your electric utility services. Your opinions are important, and we would greatly appreciate your participation. Your response will be kept entirely confidential. We only need about 5 minutes of your time.

SCREENING QUESTIONS

S1. What is your age as of your last birthday?

Under age 50 – ASK S2
[RECORD IN YEARS] – GO TO S3
Don’t know [DO NOT READ] - term
Refused [DO NOT READ] - term

S2. May I speak to someone in your household who is age 50 or older?

Yes
No [TERMINATE]

S-3. Does your household pay an electricity bill to a utility provider?

Yes [CONTINUE]
No [TERMINATE]
Don’t know/Refused [Thank and terminate]

S-4. What company do you pay an electricity bill to? [RECORD ANSWER]

Pepco [DO NOT READ LIST]
Other
Q1. How concerned are you about the costs of your electricity going up? Are you extremely concerned, very concerned, somewhat concerned, not very concerned or not at all concerned? Are you …[READ ANSWERS]?

- 21% Extremely concerned
- 24% Very concerned
- 23% Somewhat concerned
- 16% Not very concerned
- 13% Not at all concerned
- 3% Not sure [DO NOT READ]
- <0.5% Refused [DO NOT READ]

Q2. The electric company has installed a new type of meter called a “smart meter” in all District of Columbia residences. A smart meter is a new technology that tracks electricity use based on the time you use it. Smart meters also communicate wirelessly with your electricity company. Are you aware that smart meters have been installed in Washington, DC?

- 67% Yes
- 31% No
- 2% Not sure [DO NOT READ]
- <0.5% Refused [DO NOT READ]

Q3. An additional function of the new smart meter is that the electricity company can remotely connect or disconnect service. Currently, the company cannot remotely disconnect service for non-payment. A representative must come to your home and notify you.

Do you support or oppose the electricity company disconnecting service for non-payment without a home visit to notify the customer? Is that strongly or somewhat?

- 12% Strongly support disconnecting service for non-payment without a home visit to notify the customer
- 6% Somewhat support disconnecting service for non-payment without a home visit to notify the customer
- 4% Neither support or oppose disconnecting service for non-payment without a home visit to notify the customer
- 12% Somewhat oppose disconnecting service for non-payment without a home visit to notify the customer
- 60% Strongly oppose disconnecting service for non-payment without a home visit to notify the customer
- 6% Not sure [DO NOT READ]
- 1% Refused [DO NOT READ]
Q4. The DC Public Service Commission recently created new reliability standards for the electricity companies. The new standard seeks to reduce the length and frequency of everyday outages. If the electricity company fails to meet these new standards, do you think they should then be penalized?

75%  Yes
14%  No
10%  Not sure [DO NOT READ]
1%  Refused [DO NOT READ]

Q5. The DC Public Service Commission recently required the electricity companies to submit a Major Storm Outage Plan to better prevent the scope of outages and improve restoration of power to customers. If the electricity company does not restore power within a reasonable time frame, should they be forced to pay a fine?

72%  Yes
16%  No
11%  Not sure [DO NOT READ]
1%  Refused [DO NOT READ]

Our final set of questions is for classification purposes only and will be kept entirely confidential.

D1  Record Gender

44%  Male
56%  Female

D2  Do you own or rent your primary residence?

71%  Own
27%  Rent
1%  Other
1%  Refused [DO NOT READ]

D3  What type of home is your primary residence?

49%  Single family home
<0.5%  Mobile home
7%  Town home or duplex
13%  Rowhouse
19%  Apartment
9%  Condominium or co-op
3%  Other, please specify
D4 Which of the following best describes your current employment status? [READ ANSWERS]

- 7% Self-employed full-time
- 3% Self-employed part-time
- 28% Employed full-time
- 4% Employed part-time
- 45% Retired and not working at all
- 5% Unemployed and looking for work
- 6% Not in the labor force for other reasons
- 1% Not sure [DO NOT READ]
- 2% Refused [DO NOT READ]

D-5 What is your current marital status? [READ ANSWERS]

- 38% Married
- 3% Living with your partner or significant other
- 3% Separated
- 12% Divorced
- 12% Widowed
- 28% Currently single and never married
- 4% Refused [DO NOT READ]

D6 IF D5=MARRIED, ASK “Are you or your spouse currently a member of A-A-R-P?” IF D5=PARTNER OR SIGNIFICANT OTHER, ASK “Are you or your partner or significant other currently a member of A-A-R-P?” IF D5=something else, ASK “Are you currently a member of A-A-R-P?”

- 54% Yes
- 42% No
- 2% Not sure [DO NOT READ]
- 2% Refused [DO NOT READ]

D7 Are you of Hispanic, Spanish, or Latino origin or descent?

- 3% Yes
- 93% No
- 1% Not sure [DO NOT READ]
- 3% Refused [DO NOT READ]
D-8 What is your race? [READ ANSWERS]

32% White or Caucasian
54% Black or African American
1% American Indian or Alaska Native
   - Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
1% Asian
5% Other
1% Not sure [DO NOT READ]
7% Refused [DO NOT READ]

D-9 We realize income is a private matter and so rather than ask you anything specific about your income, I’d like to ask you to please stop me when I get to the category that includes your household’s income before taxes in 2011. Was it…. [READ EACH ANSWER CATEGORY]?

10% Less than $10,000
6% $10,000 to less than $20,000
5% $20,000 to less than $30,000
7% $30,000 to less than $40,000
7% $40,000 to less than $50,000
6% $50,000 to less than $60,000
6% $60,000 to less than $75,000
8% $75,000 to less than $100,000
10% $100,000 to less than $150,000
5% $150,000 to less than $200,000
8% $200,000 or more
4% Not sure [DO NOT READ]
18% Refused [DO NOT READ]
AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, with a membership of more than 37 million, that helps people turn their goals and dreams into real possibilities, strengthens communities and fights for the issues that matter most to families such as healthcare, employment and income security, retirement planning, affordable utilities and protection from financial abuse. We advocate for individuals in the marketplace by selecting products and services of high quality and value to carry the AARP name as well as help our members obtain discounts on a wide range of products, travel, and services. A trusted source for lifestyle tips, news and educational information, AARP produces AARP The Magazine, the world's largest circulation magazine; AARP Bulletin; www.aarp.org; AARP TV & Radio; AARP Books; and AARP en Español, a bilingual news source. AARP does not endorse candidates for public office or make contributions to political campaigns or candidates. The AARP Foundation is an affiliated charity that provides security, protection, and empowerment to older persons in need with support from thousands of volunteers, donors, and sponsors. AARP has staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Learn more at www.aarp.org.

State Research brings the right knowledge at the right time to our state and national partners in support of their efforts to improve the lives of people age 50+. State Research consultants provide strategic insights and actionable research to attain measurable state and national outcomes.

The views expressed herein are for information, debate, and discussion, and do not necessarily represent official policies of AARP.

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