



# Energised 2021-2026 Community Survey

**Engagement findings report**

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Report purpose

This report presents the key findings from the Energised 2021-2026 community engagement activities delivered between Monday 26 August 2019 and Monday 7 October 2019. The findings in this report will assist in finalising the CitiPower, Powercor and United Energy proposals which will be submitted to the Australian Energy Regulator (**AER**) on Friday 31 January 2020.

## 1.2 Project background

The CitiPower, Powercor and United Energy networks are among the most reliable and efficient in Victoria. We own and manage the poles and wires that deliver electricity to nearly 1.8 million homes and businesses in Victoria, with responsibility for the quality and reliability of electricity delivered to customers within these networks.

As electricity distribution businesses, CitiPower, Powercor and United Energy are regulated according to five-year regulatory periods. This process is referred to as the Electricity Distribution Price Reset (**EDPR**) and is governed by the National Electricity Rules and administered by the AER.

In accordance with the regulatory period, every five years our business submits proposals to the AER for how we will charge for electricity based on our expected costs and the needs of our customers. Energised 2021-2026 is a statement of our approach to planning for this period.

Since June 2017 we have been seeking input from our customers and diverse stakeholders to inform the development of Energised 2021-2026. This has included customer engagement such as surveys, meetings with local, state and national stakeholders and the establishment of an Advisory Panel.

What we have heard so far is that our customers want:

- a resilient network
- an affordable network
- a flexible network that supports customer choices.

These three priorities have assisted in the development of the draft proposals, which outline the value and services we will provide in 2021-2026. Our draft proposals include programs that work towards ensuring we provide a safe environment for our customers and workers, while ensuring a reliable supply. Our draft proposals include programs that will make it easier for our customers to export solar and use batteries, make new connections and use data to make more informed energy choices. A key priority of our draft proposals is to keep prices low for our customers and design price structures that are fair and easily understood.

From August to October 2019 we went back out to the community to test these priorities. The outcomes of the engagement will help our businesses understand community values and priorities, and will help us ensure that the views and values of our customers are captured in our proposals.

# 2 Engagement approach

## 2.1 Summary of engagement activities

This report outlines the following CitiPower, Powercor and United Energy community engagement activities between 26 August and 7 October 2019:

- community pop-ups at shopping centres and events
- online survey.

### 2.1.1 Community pop-ups

CitiPower, Powercor and United Energy delivered community pop-ups at central shopping centres within each network and at United Energy Around the Bay event. The key objectives of the pop-ups were to:

- inform customers of the draft proposals; the purpose of the proposal and what it includes
- understand customer values and preferences on key issues addressed in the proposals, including: planned outages, pricing, access to data, and their appetite for renewable energy.

Table 1 provides a summary of the community pop-ups, including location, date and times.

Table 1. Community pop-up locations, dates and times

Network	Location	Date and times	Community reach
CitiPower	Melbourne Central Shopping Centre	Monday 26 August to Sunday 1 September, at the following times: Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, 10am to 7pm Thursday and Friday, 10am to 9pm Saturday and Sunday, 10am to 7pm	Shopping centre weekly foot traffic: 200,000 to 220,000 people
Powercor	Westfield Geelong Shopping Centre	Monday 2 September to Sunday 8 September, at the following times: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, 9am to 5.30pm Friday, 9am to 9pm Saturday, 9am to 5pm Sunday, 10am to 5pm	Shopping centre weekly foot traffic: 166,192 people
United Energy	Rosebud Plaza Shopping Centre	Monday 9 September to Sunday 15 September, at the following times: Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, 9am to 5.30pm Thursday and Friday, 9am to 5.00pm Saturday, 9am to 5pm Sunday, 10am to 5pm	Shopping centre weekly foot traffic: 24,500 people
All networks	United Energy Around the Bay, Queenscliff Ferry terminal	Sunday 6 October, 9am to 1pm	3,000 cyclists at the ferry terminal, and our team gave away 170 coffees

The pop-ups were an opportunity for the community to speak with the CitiPower, Powercor and United Energy team, ask questions about the draft proposals and general network questions, and provide their feedback via the online survey. For the full online survey see Appendix A: Online survey.



Figure 2. AER CCP Member, Mark Henley, at the Melbourne Central pop-up



Figure 1. Our team at Rosebud Plaza pop-up

### 2.1.2 Online survey

An online survey was hosted on Talking Electricity, the businesses website dedicated to the CitiPower, Powercor and United Energy EDPR process. The survey will remain open until Sunday 1 December 2019.

The key objectives of the online survey were to:

- provide an additional opportunity for community to participate in the engagement
- understand customer values and preferences on key issues addressed in the proposals, including: planned outages, pricing, access to data, and their appetite for renewable energy.

For the full online survey see Appendix A: Online survey.

## 2.2 Summary of communication activities

Throughout the engagement period the project team sought to inform as many people as possible about the project and to encourage participation. The following promotional techniques and activities were used to inform the community about the project.

- Approximately 1200 Energised 2021-2026 community survey cards, promoting the survey with a QR code and project website, were handed out at the community pop-ups.
- A link to the online survey was available on the project website, [talkingelectricity.com.au](http://talkingelectricity.com.au), and the details of the community pop-ups were published on the Upcoming Events page
- Energised 2021-2026 factsheets for CitiPower, Powercor and United Energy were available at the community pop-ups for customers to read and take with them.
- The engagement activities were promoted through social media channels, including Facebook and LinkedIn, commencing two weeks prior to the activations at each location.

- Emails with details of community pop-ups and online survey were sent to stakeholders, including CitiPower, Powercor and United Energy Energy Futures Customer Advisory Panel and Customer Consultative Committee, the AER's Consumer Challenge Panel (CCP17), consumer advocates, state government local government and members for parliament.
- The engagement was communicated internally, encouraging staff to promote the pop-ups and online survey to their friends, family and networks.

## 2.3 Engagement limitations

There were some limitations of the engagement process, which have been outlined below.

- The information in this report does not represent the views of a representative sample of our customers. All the people who participated in the engagement self-selected to take part in the project. Overall results therefore should not be regarded as a representation of the views of a statically validated sample of customers.
- As our engagement activities occurred in public spaces and not all people knew their electricity distributor, some people who participated in the engagement activities were other network customers. We have still captured their views in this report.
- Not all participants provided their postcode in the survey, so were not able to identify the relevant network for all participants. We have still captured their views in this report.
- The survey included only multiple choice questions. Participants were therefore not able to provide the reasons for their responses via the survey.
- It is possible that some people participated in multiple engagement activities, for example completed the survey at the community-pop and completed the survey online via the project website. If so, their views have been captured more than once in this report.
- In some instances, participants did not answer all questions; this meant that some questions received fewer answers than others.

# 3 Engagement findings

This section provides a summary of the engagement findings. The findings have been presented according to the following headings:

- Participant overview
- Values
- Resilient network
- Flexible network
- Affordable network.

## 3.1 Participant overview

A total of 308 people completed the survey, either at a community pop-up or online. Of these, 35% (109 participants) were Powercor customers, 24% (74 participants) were CitiPower customers and 19% (57 participants) were United Energy customers. The remaining participants were other Victorian network customers, unknown or were visiting from interstate or overseas. Figure 3 illustrates the participant results.

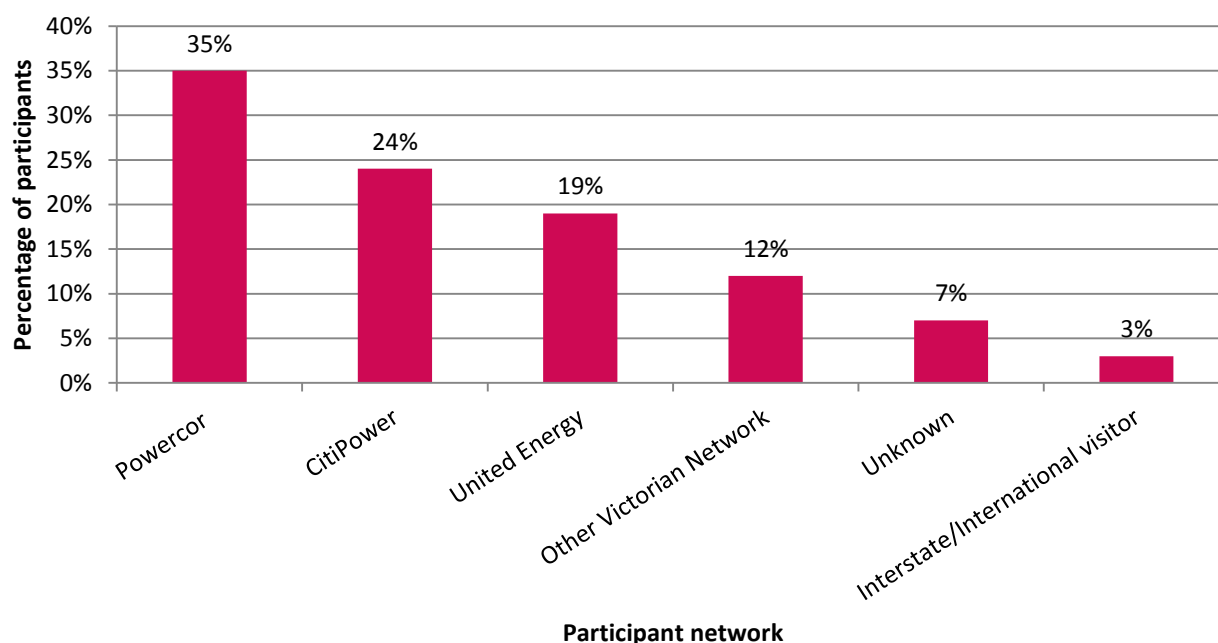
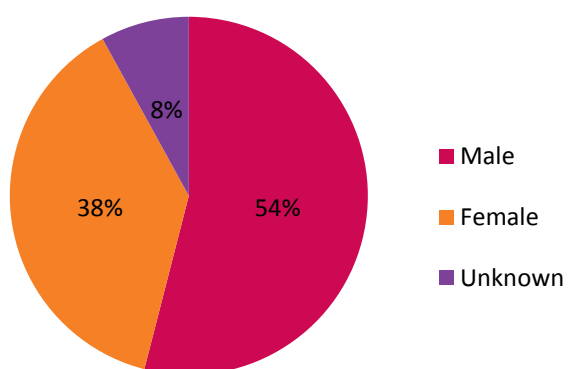


Figure 3. Overview of participants network (n=308)



More participants identify as male, 54% (166 participants), than female, 38% (117 participants). 25 participants didn't provide the gender they identify as.

The age of participants was relatively evenly spread across age groups, however more participants (25%, 78 participants) were aged 65 years or over. Of the 308, 18% (56 participants) were aged 25-34 and 15% (47 participants) were

Figure 4. Overview of participant gender (n=308)

aged 18-24. An overview of all participants age is illustrated in Figure 5.

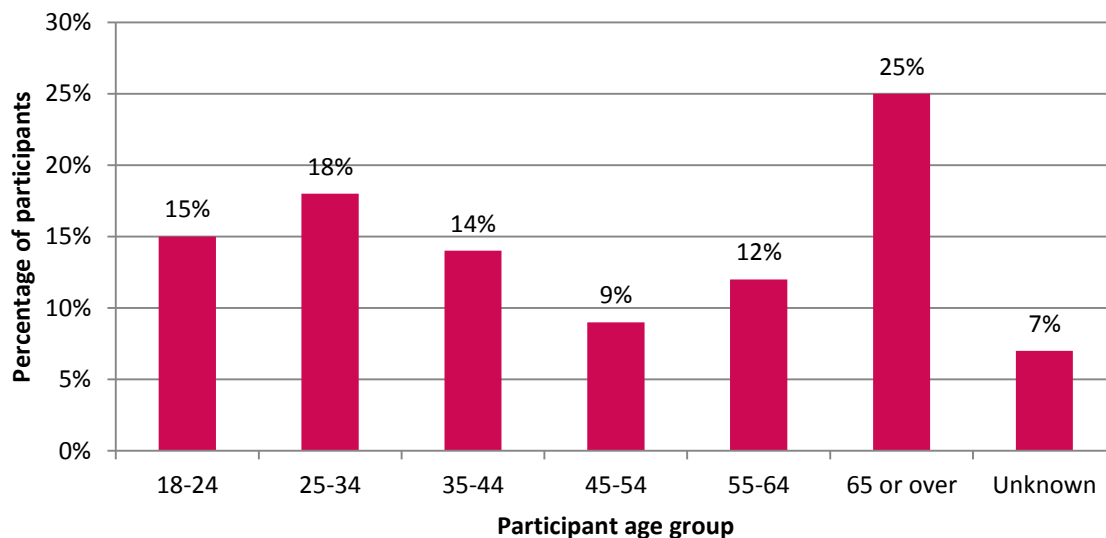


Figure 5. Overview of participant age (n=308)

In previous engagement for Energised 2021-2026 it has been difficult to capture feedback from young people. It is challenging to engage young people because they are less likely to participate in formal engagement activities, such as deliberative forums, and they are often time poor.

The community pop-ups sought to provide an opportunity for young people to engage in the project through a short conversation in a location and time convenient for them. A QR code for smart devices was also handed out to allow people to complete the survey on their phone and is recognised as a preferred mechanism for engagement with this age group.

## 3.2 Values

### 3.2.1 All participants

We were interested to understand what our customers' think are the most important things we should focus on when it comes to powering their homes. The survey asked participants to rank five statements from most important to least important. Figure 6 provides an overview of participant priorities.

Note: statements that received a higher score were more important to participants.

As evidenced in the Figure 6 overall, the most important thing to participants is ensuring electricity is available all the time, closely followed by ensuring electricity is affordable.



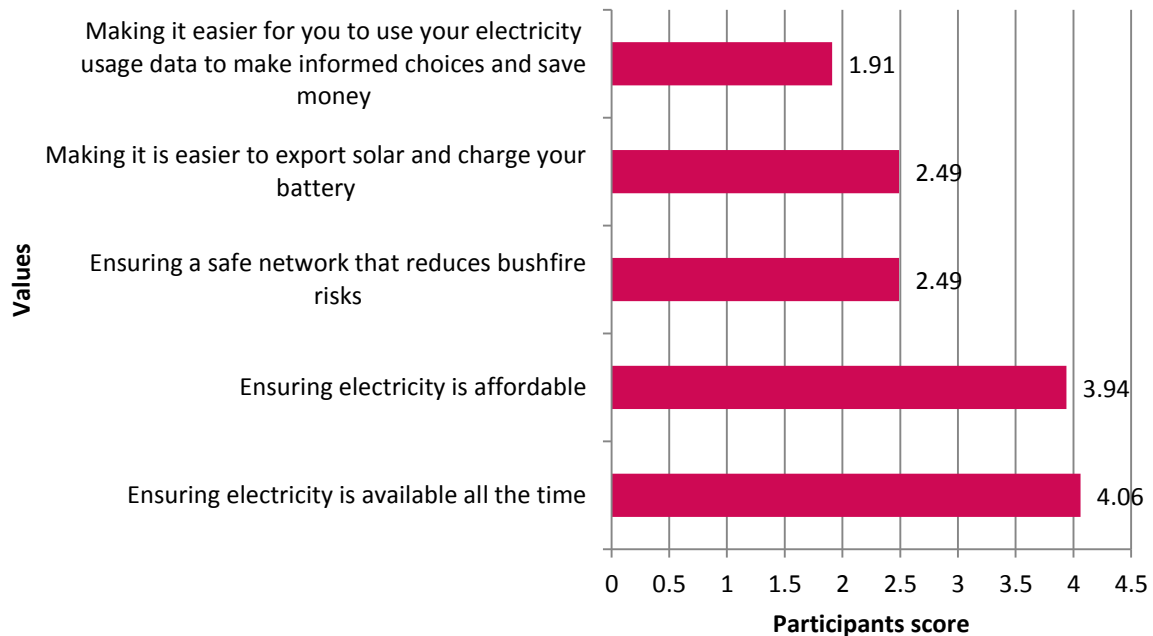


Figure 6. Participant values (n=305)

### 3.2.2 CitiPower, Powercor and United Energy customers

Of the 305 participants that completed the values question, 237 were a customer of CitiPower, Powercor or United Energy. The priorities of the network customers are reflected in Figure 7. Evidently the most important thing to CitiPower and United Energy customers is 'ensuring electricity is available all the time', while 'ensuring electricity is affordable' was the most important thing for Powercor customers. The following are observations of customer scores:

- Ensuring a safe network was more important to Powercor customers than it was to CitiPower and United Energy customers; however it was ranked third for all three networks.
- Making it easier for customers to see their electricity usage was more important for CitiPower customers than it was for Powercor and United Energy customers.
- Making it easier to export solar and charge batteries was more important for United Energy and Powercor customers than it was for CitiPower customers.

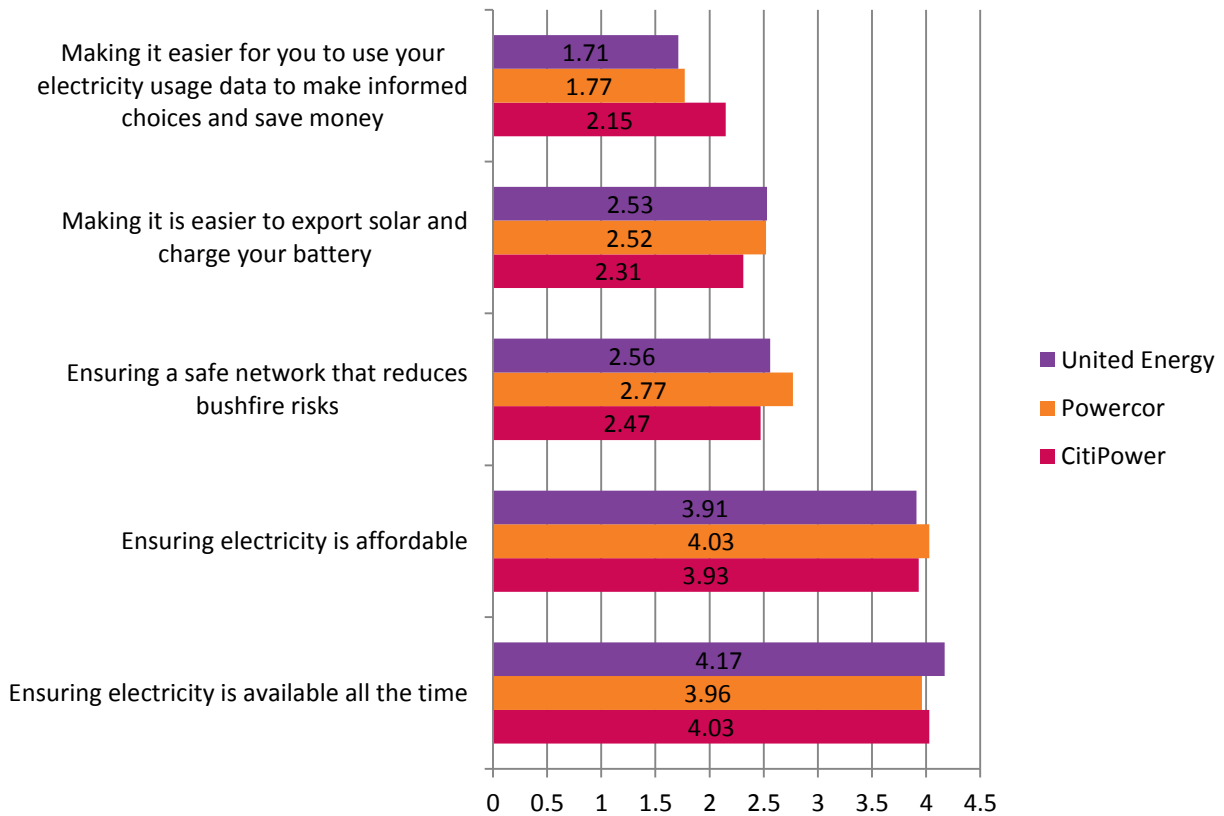


Figure 7. CitiPower, Powercor and United Energy customer values

### 3.3 Resilient network

#### 3.3.1 All participants

Sometimes we have to turn off supply of electricity to maintain the networks. We were interested to understand from participants what their preference is in terms of frequency and duration of outages. In total, more participants (57%) said they would prefer it to stay the same as now, followed by more frequent outages but for shorter periods, as shown in Figure 8 below.

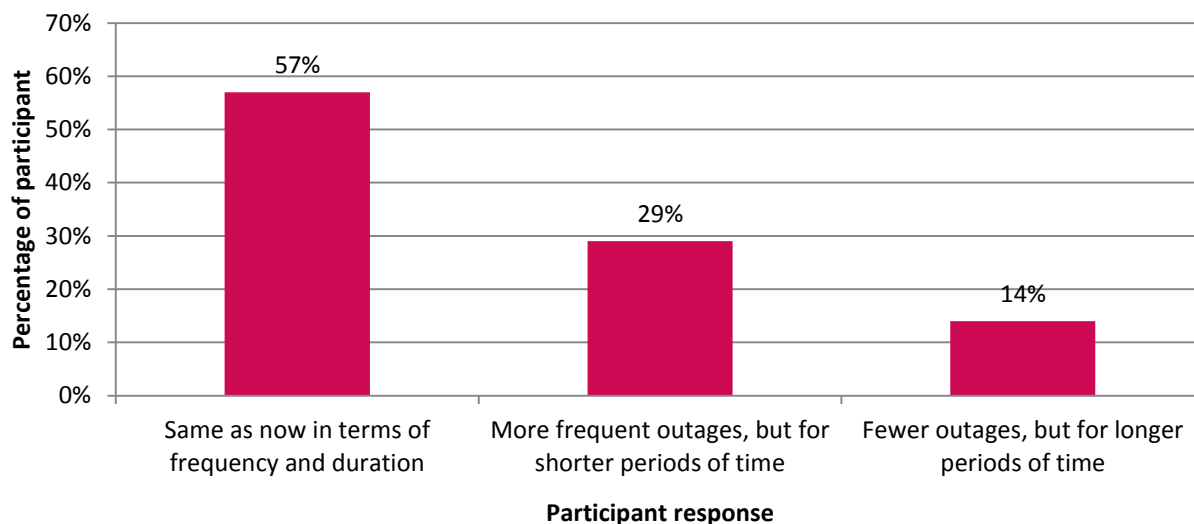


Figure 8. Participant preference for planned outage (n=299)

### 3.3.2 CitiPower, Powercor and United Energy customers

Of the 299 participants that responded to the question of planned outages, 107 were Powercor customers, 72 were CitiPower customers and 57 were United Energy customers. As evidenced in Figure 9 over 50% of customers from all three networks said they would prefer planned outages to stay the same as now in terms of frequency and duration. However, a greater percentage of United Energy customers (65%) would prefer planned outages to stay as they are now, than Powercor and CitiPower customers.

Powercor customers generally experience a greater number of outages and for a longer duration than the other networks. The responses below are reflective of the customer feedback, with customers preferring outages that last a shorter period of time.

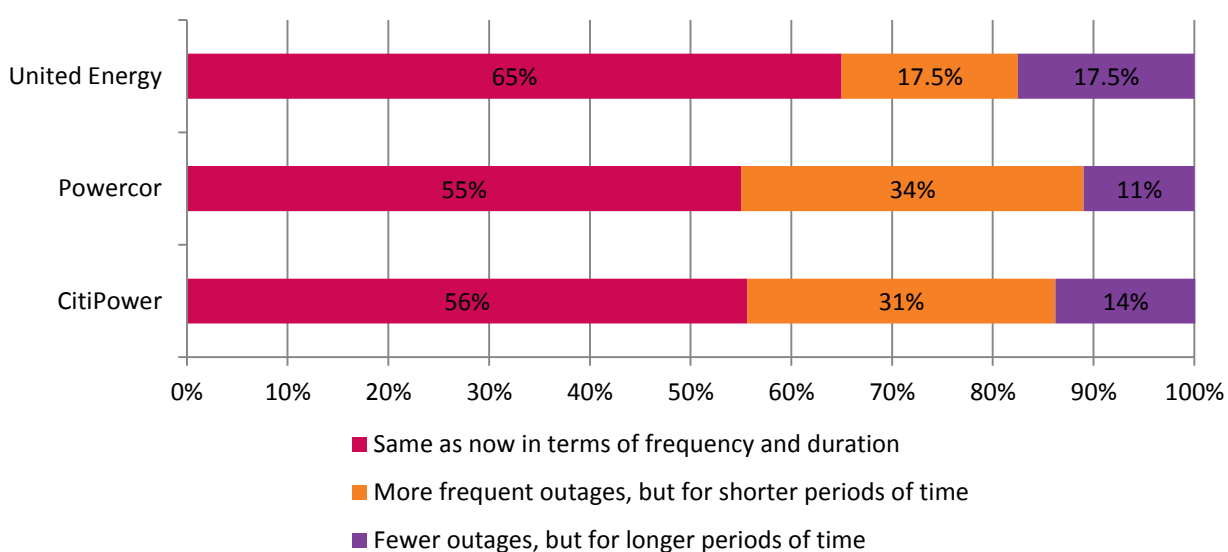


Figure 9. CitiPower, Powercor and United Energy customer preferences for planned outages

## 3.4 Affordable network

### 3.4.1 All customers

Ensuring an affordable network is a key priority for CitiPower, Powercor and United Energy customers. Currently the price of electricity is the same throughout the day. By varying the price throughout the day, customers could have the option to alter their electricity usage in response to lower and higher prices.

We asked participants whether they would prefer that charges stay the same throughout the day or vary. As illustrated in Figure 10, more participants (64%) said they would prefer charges stay the same throughout the day.

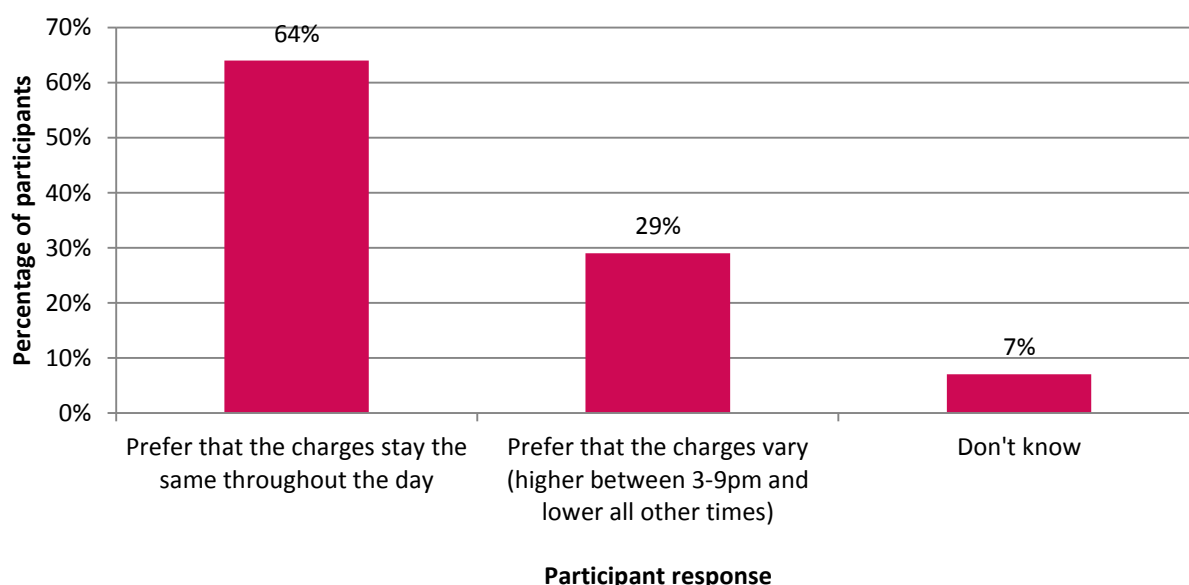


Figure 10. Participant preference for electricity pricing (n=300)

While the survey did not ask participants why they chose that response, many participants shared their reasoning with the team at the community pop-ups. The following were the main reasons participants gave for selecting, 'prefer that the charges stay the same throughout the day'.

- Participants were confused about the structure of their bills and how the cost would pass through the network tariff.
- Participants felt that they didn't have enough control over when they can use electricity, stating they don't have energy efficient or smart appliances, and therefore wouldn't have the capacity to respond.

### 3.4.2 CitiPower, Powercor and United Energy customers

Of the 300 participants that completed the question, 73 were CitiPower customers, 109 were Powercor customers and 57 were United Energy customers. As evidenced in Figure 11 over 57% of customers from all three networks said they would prefer the charges to stay the same throughout the day. However, a greater percentage of CitiPower customers (35.62%) would prefer the charges to vary, than the Powercor and United Energy customers.

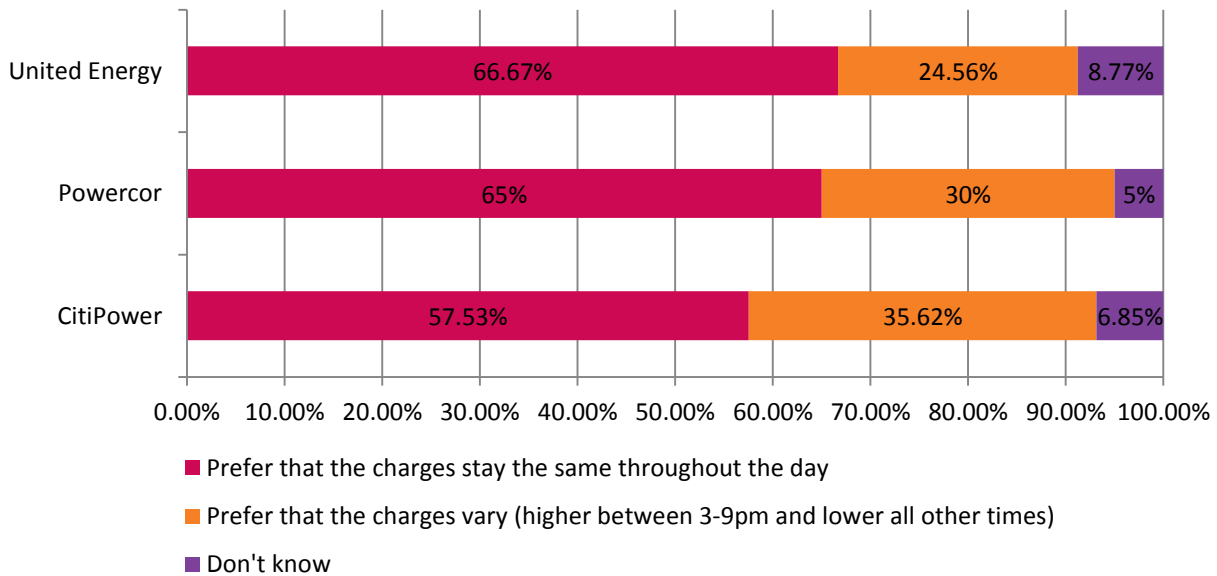


Figure 11. CitiPower, Powercor and United Energy customer preferences for electricity pricing

## 3.5 Flexible network

### 3.5.1 All participants

Providing a more flexible network will help support customer choice. We wanted to understand from our customers the types of information they would like to help support their choices and how quickly they think we should be upgrading the network to allow for more renewable energy.

#### Accessing electricity usage data

Smart meters can provide information that can help customers manage their electricity usage. We asked participants what information they would like to see to help them make decisions about their energy. Participants could select one or more of the five options. As evidenced in Figure 12 approximately 50% of participants would like to see each option, while 15% weren't interested in seeing any of the information.

While access to data was considered the lowest priority for participants (as evidenced in Figure 6), the feedback here demonstrates its importance in choice and affordability which are key customer priorities. Evidently over half the participants would like to be able to access their usage data and other information to help them make decisions that could reduce the cost of electricity.

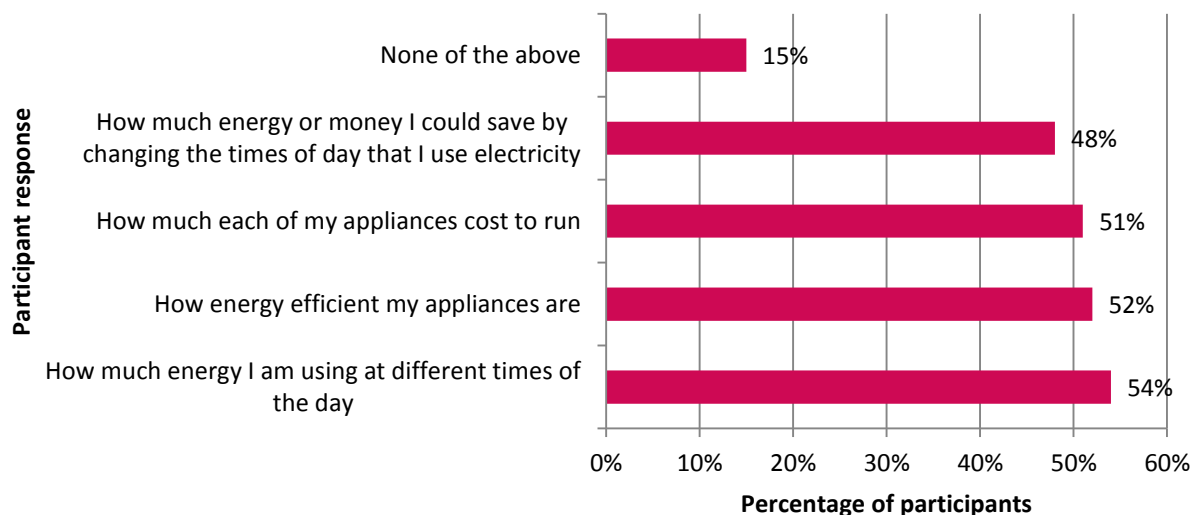


Figure 12. Information participants would like to see from their smart meters (n=299)

### Exporting solar

More and more of our residential customers are installing solar and wanting to export their solar energy back onto the grid. Our networks require upgrades to allow for this increase in demand. We asked participants whether they thought we should upgrade our electricity network quicker to allow for more renewable energy to be exported back to the grid. More participants (59.5%) thought we should upgrade the network faster, while 25.3% of participants felt that it was happening at the right speed, as illustrated in Figure 13.

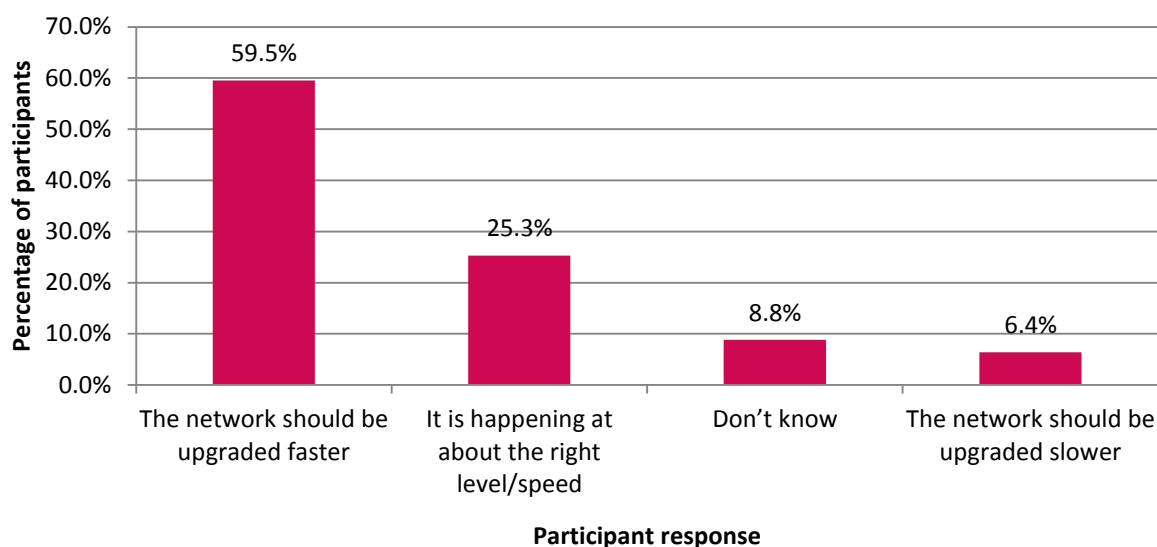


Figure 13. Participants ambition for upgrading the network to allow for renewable energy (n=296)

### 3.5.2 CitiPower, Powercor and United Energy customers

#### Accessing electricity usage data

Of the 299 participants that provided what information they would like to see, 238 were CitiPower, Powercor and United Energy customers. Overall, the results across the networks were similar, as evidenced in Figure 14. However the following are key observations of participants responses:

- A greater percentage (60%) of CitiPower customers were more interested in seeing how much energy they use at different times of the day, than Powercor or United Energy customers.
- A greater percentage (60%) of United Energy customers were more interested in seeing how much each of their appliances cost to run, than CitiPower or Powercor customers.
- Generally, Powercor customers were less interested in seeing their electricity usage data than CitiPower and United Energy customers.

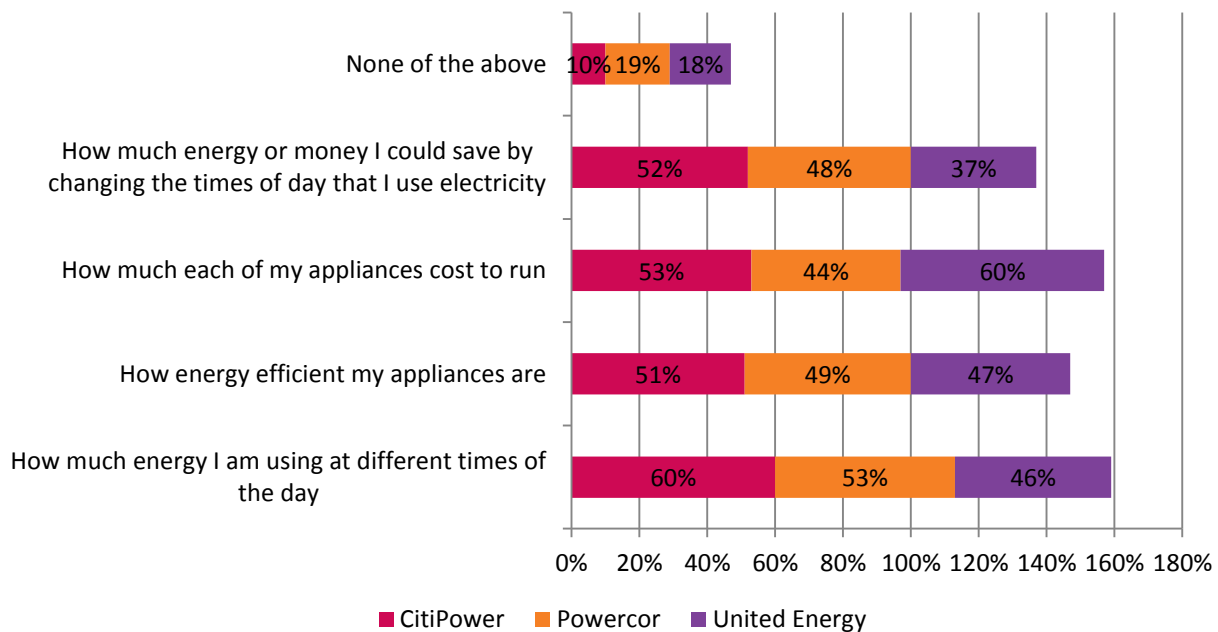


Figure 14. Information CitiPower, Powercor and United Energy customers would like to see from their smart meters

#### Exporting solar

Of the 296 participants that completed the question regarding upgrading the network for renewable energy, 72 were CitiPower customers, 109 were Powercor customers and 57 were United Energy customers. Figure 15 illustrates their responses. The following are key observations of participants responses:

- A greater percentage of customers from the three networks were more likely select 'the network should upgrade faster' than any other response.
- CitiPower customers were more likely to want the network to upgrade faster and were less likely to want the network to upgrade slower, than Powercor and United Energy customers.

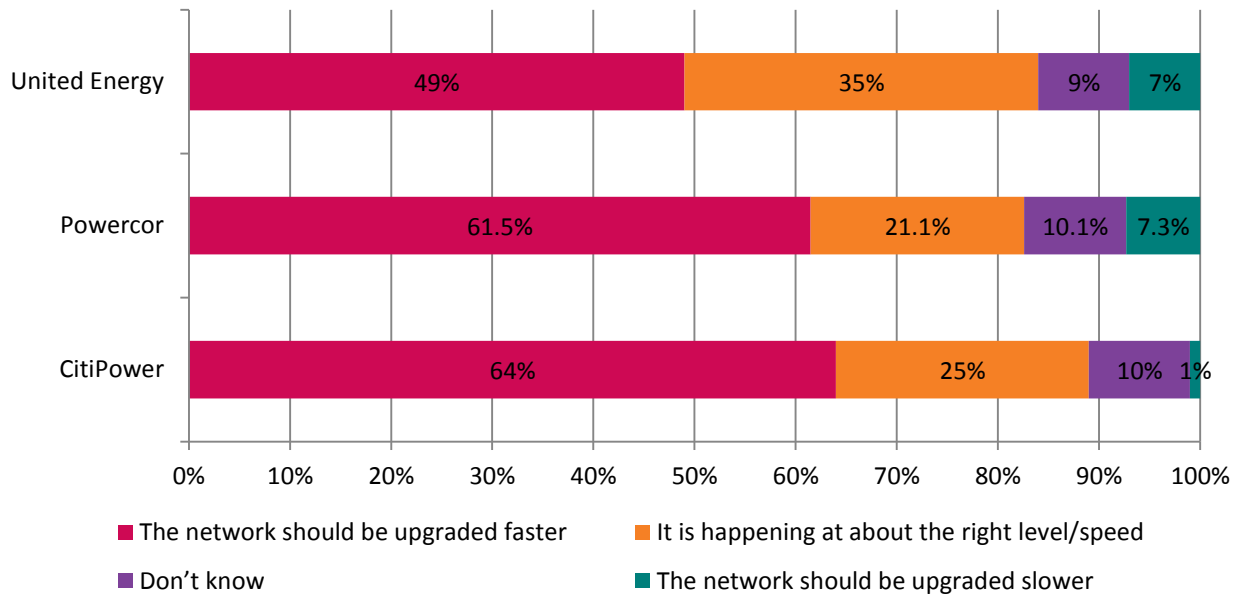


Figure 15. CitiPower, Powercor and United Energy customers ambition for upgrading the network to allow for renewable energy



# 4 Engagement observations

It's important to us that our team are involved in engagement with the community and that we reflect on what they heard. Throughout the engagement process we asked the CitiPower, Powercor and United Energy community pop-up team to document their observations. This section outlines the team's key observations of:

- customers views and values
- the pop-up from an activation perspective.

## 4.1 Customers views and values

Our team reflected the following observations about customer views and values.

- Customers were often confused about the networks role, with a small minority of customers demonstrating knowledge of the difference between the retailer and distributor. Many people thought the team at the pop-up stand were electricity retailers and thought we were trying to sell them something. They were more likely to talk to us after we explained that we were from distribution networks.
- Some customers reflected concerns about power outages which were fuelled by recent reports that there is going to be a shortage of power this summer.
- Some of the elderly customers reflected on the days of State Electricity Commission Victoria (**SECV**) and the hike in prices that followed privatisation.
- Younger customers generally reported that they were accepting of current costs, but were keen to have cheaper power.
- Customers generally reported their experience with the networks as good from a reliability perspective, reporting that they only lost power 'once in a blue moon'.
- Some customers struggled to see where our costs are reflected in their bill.
- Some customers raised the feed-in tariff for solar exports. They wanted to know why the feed-in tariff had changed recently and had been set so low.

## 4.2 The pop-up

Our team reflected the following observations about the pop-ups themselves.

- The pop-ups helped raise the profile of our businesses within the communities. It is important that we continue to be present in our community, particularly to build the capacity of our customers to understand the role we play in power.
- The pop-ups allowed our businesses to hear firsthand from our customers their views and perspectives. We should encourage more areas of the business to get out and speak to customers, as it's a good way to gain insights from customers on our services.
- Our branding should more clearly illustrate our intent of being in the community (i.e. that we are not trying to sell them something) to encourage more customers to participate in the engagement.
- Customers responded well to incentives to participation. Customers generally reported that they would rather go in the draw to win free electricity for a year rather than win an iPad. However, some people weren't interested in going into a draw. Providing on the spot incentives, such as a free coffee or energy bar, could have increased participation rates.

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Online survey

### Community survey - 5 simple questions

#### Values

1. From the list below, please tell us what you think are the most important things we should focus on when it comes to powering your home? Please rank each statement from one to five, where (1) is most important and five (5) is least important.

- Ensuring electricity is available all the time
- Ensuring electricity is affordable
- Making it is easier to export solar and charge your battery
- Ensuring a safe network that reduces bushfire risks
- Making it easier for you to use your electricity usage data to make informed choices and save money

#### Resilient network

2. Sometimes we have to turn off the supply of electricity to maintain the network. What would you prefer in terms of the frequency and duration of outages? (Note: the options below provide the same amount of time without power).

- More frequent outages, but for shorter periods of time
- Same as now in terms of frequency and duration
- Fewer outages, but for longer periods of time

#### Affordable network

3. Currently the price of electricity is the same throughout the day. By varying the price, you would have the option to alter your electricity usage in response to lower and higher prices. Which of the following options would you prefer?

- Prefer that the charges stay the same throughout the day
- Prefer that the charges vary (higher between 3-9pm and lower all other times)
- Don't know

#### Flexible network

4. Smart meters can provide information that could help you to manage your electricity usage and save money on your bill. What information would you like to see to help you make decisions about your energy use?

- How energy efficient my appliances are
- How much energy I am using at different times of the day
- How much energy or money I could save by changing the times of day that I use electricity
- How much each of my appliances cost to run
- None of the above

5. Do you think we should upgrade our electricity network quicker to allow for more renewable (or greener) energy generators to connect to the grid?

- The network should be upgraded faster
- It is happening at about the right level/speed
- The network should be upgraded slower
- Don't know