

Life Support Customer Survey Results

November 2017

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Research Objectives, Approach and Sample

Research Objectives

To improve our understanding about life support customer communication preferences during interruptions to power supply. Life support customers are those who rely on a continuous power supply for medical equipment and have registered their details with their electricity retailer.

Approach

- Retailers were contacted to provide customer email addresses for life support customers
- We designed an online quantitative survey inviting life support customers with email addresses to participate in the research.
- 6,400+ invitations were sent to life support customers
- The survey ran for 4 weeks from 27/09 /17– 31/10/17

Sample

- 1, 659 survey responses, including 89 culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) customers.
- The majority of the sample were Energy Australia Retail customers
- 988 of those surveyed said they were happy to be re-contacted for further research on the topic of power supply and life support customers

Research Insights

Key Insights

- 95% of customers who have registered as life support would like Ausgrid to contact them pro-actively when there is an unexpected loss of power at their address. The majority of our customers would like this contact to be immediate or within the first two hours of when the outage occurred. Ideally customers would then like Ausgrid to keep them informed at regular intervals until power is restored. The most desired interval is 2 hourly followed by 4 hourly.
- The preferred way for Ausgrid to notify customers when there is an unexpected loss of power is via a text message to their mobile phone followed by a phone call and this is consistent across all times periods.
- The type of medical equipment that the majority (83%) of our life support customers use is a positive airways pressure machine (PAP/CPAP). This is a diverse group of customers who experience varying levels of impact when there is an unexpected loss of power with some having immediate impacts and others less immediate impacts.
- 60% of Ausgrid's life support customers do not have an emergency action plan in the event of a loss of power supply and this increases to 74% for customers from culturally and linguistically backgrounds. Review of the open ended suggestions indicates that customers would like information and support in developing back up plans and power supply.

A photograph of a woman lying in a hospital bed, wearing a white hospital gown. She has dark, curly hair and is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The image is covered with a semi-transparent blue overlay. The text "Life Support Customer Profile" is centered in white, bold, sans-serif font.

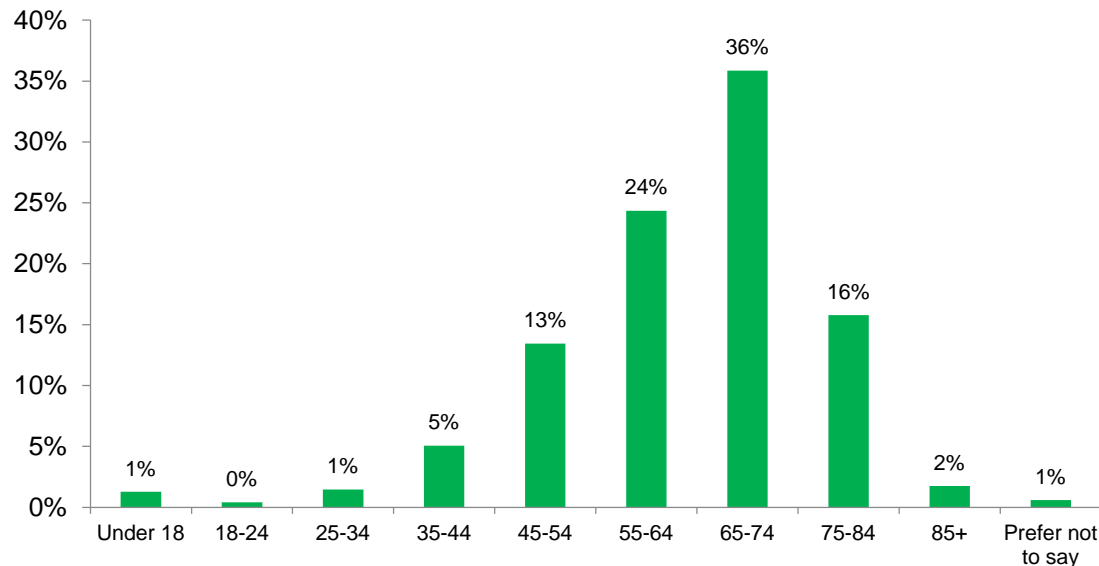
Life Support Customer Profile

Life Support Customer Profile

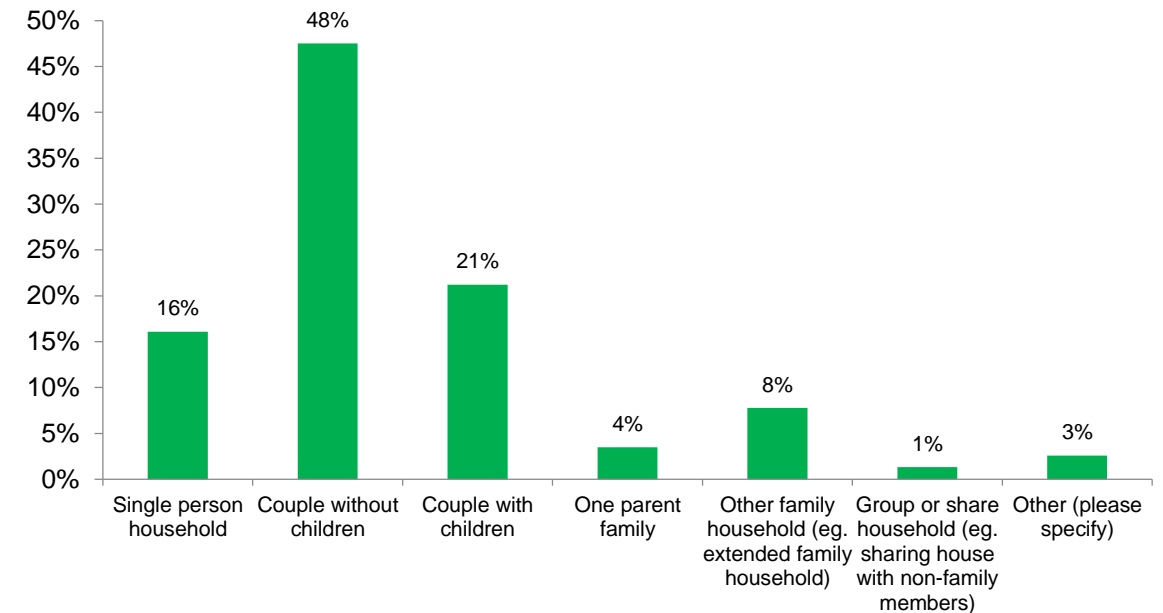
- Who are our life support customers?

- 85% of respondents said they were dependent on life support equipment, the rest were carers of life support customers.
- Two-thirds of life support customers are male.
- At least one third are between 65-74 years of age and the majority live in a household as a couple without children.

Q4. Please indicate your age (the age of the person who is dependent on life support equipment)



Q6. Which of the following best describes the household where the life support customer lives?

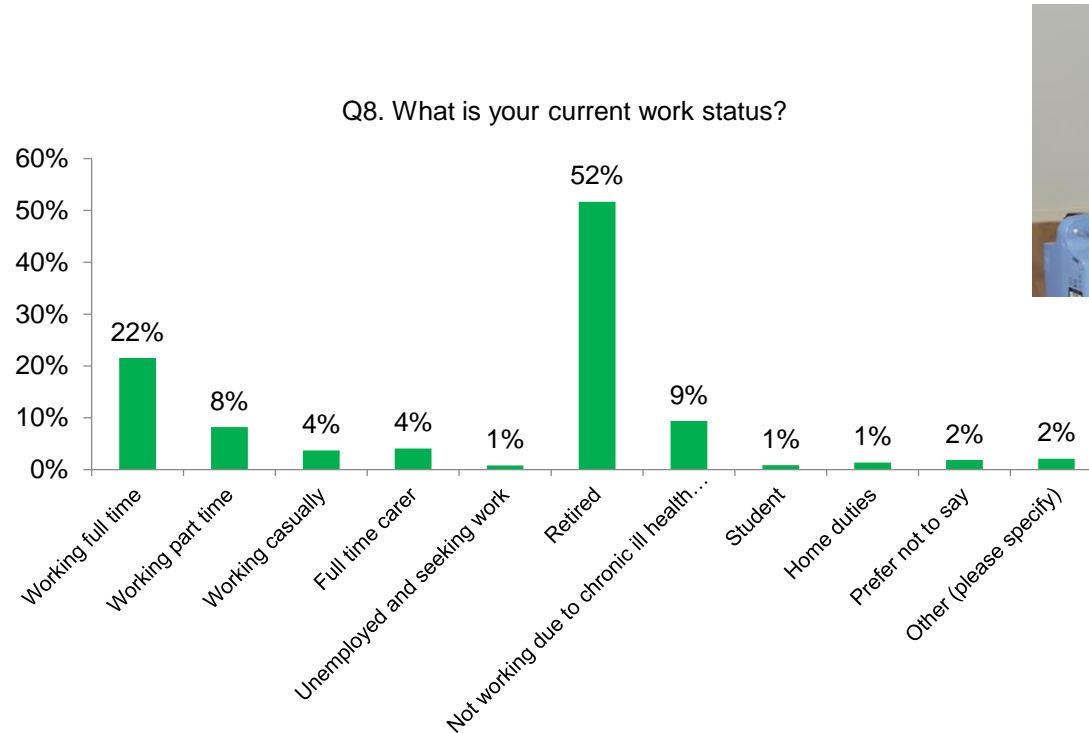


(n = 1,659 completed online responses, who answered Q4. and Q.6)

Life Support Customer Profile

- Who are our life support customers?

- Just over half of the respondents are retired, with the second largest group (22%) working full time.



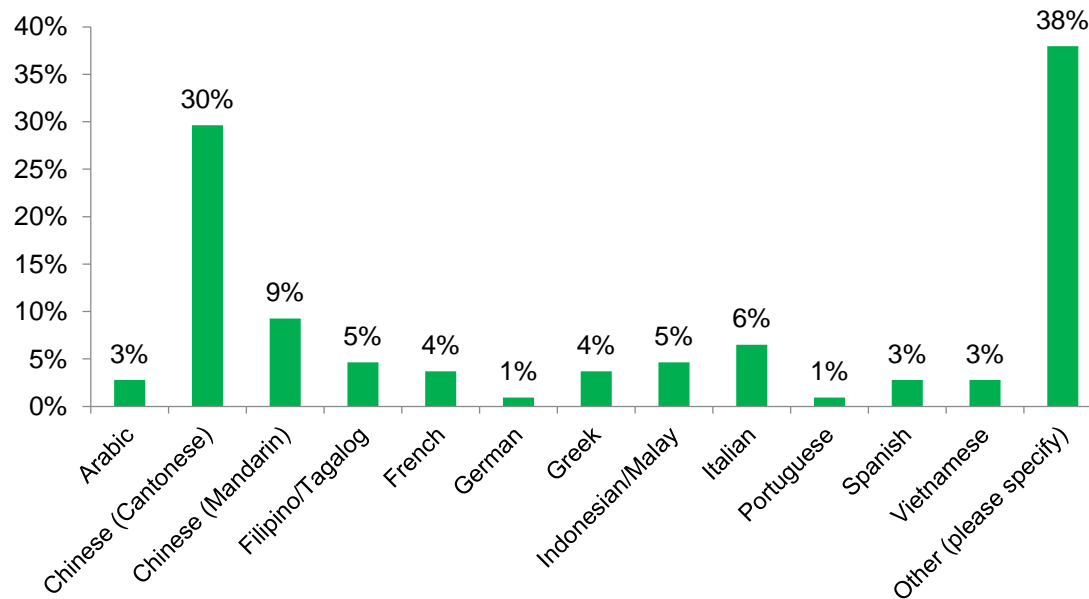
(n = 1,659 completed online responses, who answered Q8.)

Life Support Customer Profile

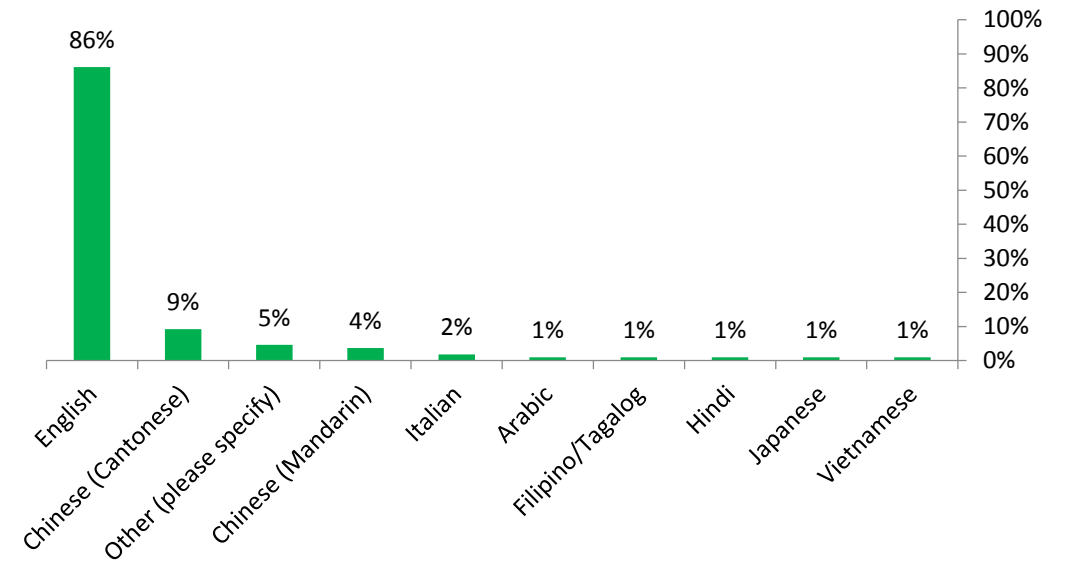
- Who are our life support customers?

- 93% speak English as their first language.
- Of those who speak a language other than English at home, the second largest group (30%) speak Cantonese.
- Of those who speak a language other than English as their first language, 86% prefer to read information in English.

Q22. And which language(s) other than English are spoken at home?



Q23. In which language do you prefer to read information?
(when receiving leaflets or reading language translations on websites)

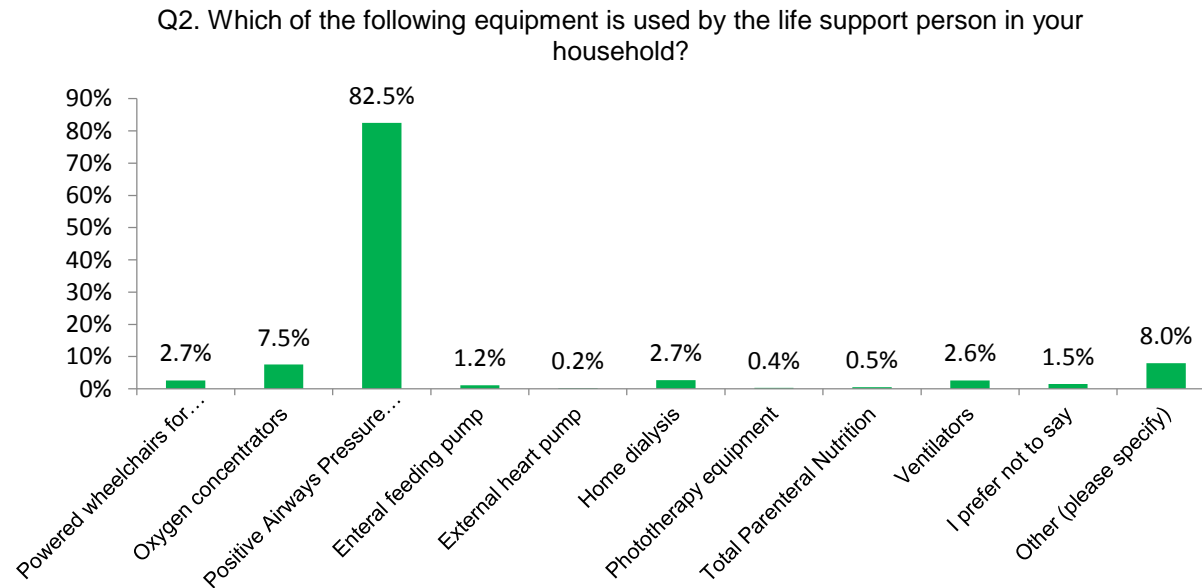


(n = 1,659 completed online responses who answered Q21, 108 who answered Q22 + Q23.)

Life Support Customer Profile

-Types of equipment used by life support customers

- The vast majority (83%) of life support customers use a positive airways pressure machine (PAP/CPAP) which is used to treat sleep apnea.
- Customer comments indicate that this is a diverse group in terms of the impact of loss of power.



"Within seconds of power going off, I wake gasping for air".

"I use a CPAP machine but my life doesn't depend upon it".

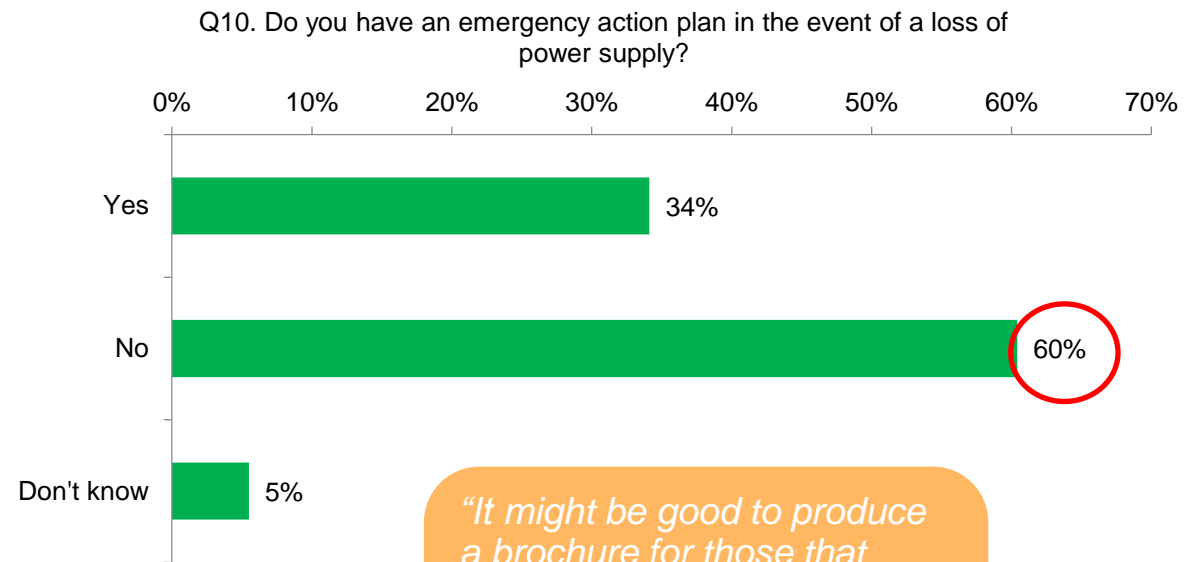
"I am a CPAP user. Although I am classified as a life support customer, my need is not critical".

"If a problem is developing, notification is important as I will not be able to breathe properly without the air flow if I am asleep".

(n = 1,659 completed online responses, who answered Q2.)

Life Support Customer Profile – Back up plans

- 60% of Ausgrid's life support customers do not have an emergency action plan in the event of a loss of power supply



“It might be good to produce a brochure for those that have life support equipment of other options that can be used in the event of power loss, e.g. generators, battery backup systems etc.”

“Ausgrid could look at advising, sourcing, subsidising solar or hardwired GEL batteries etc. to act as UPS during planned or unplanned outages”

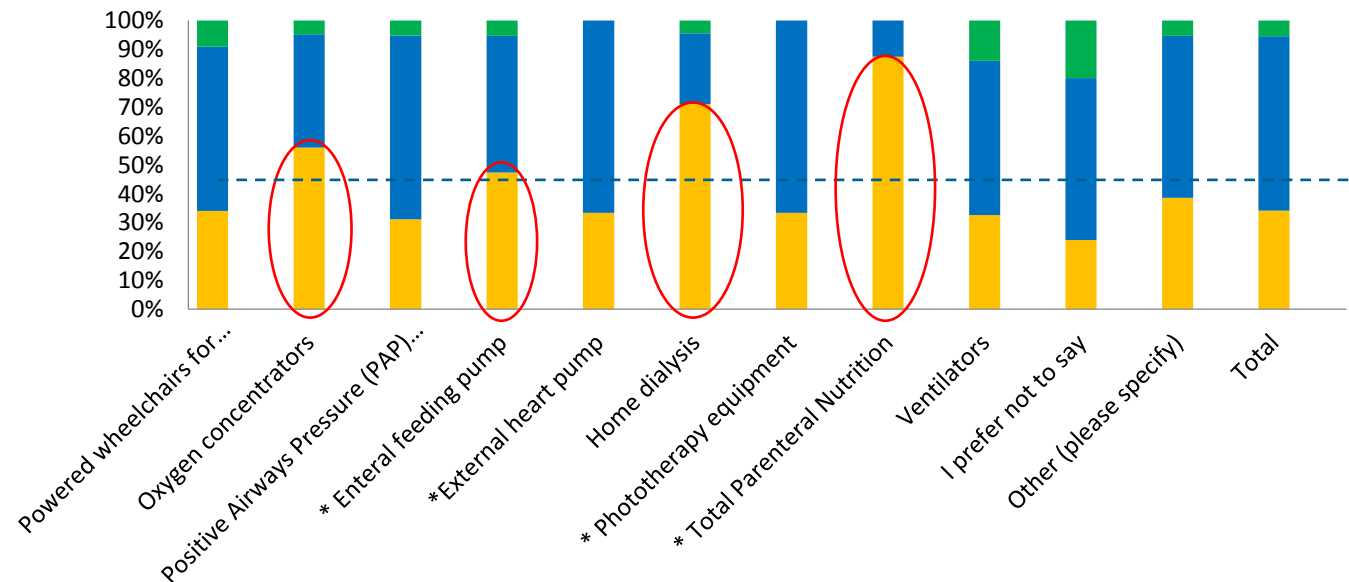
(n = 1,659 completed online responses, who answered Q10.)

Life Support Customer Profile - Back up plans by equipment type

- Life support customers who use a home dialysis machine, an oxygen concentrator, or external feeding pump are *more likely* to have an emergency action plan than customers who use other medical equipment

Q10.Do you have an emergency action plan in the event of a loss of power supply?

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know

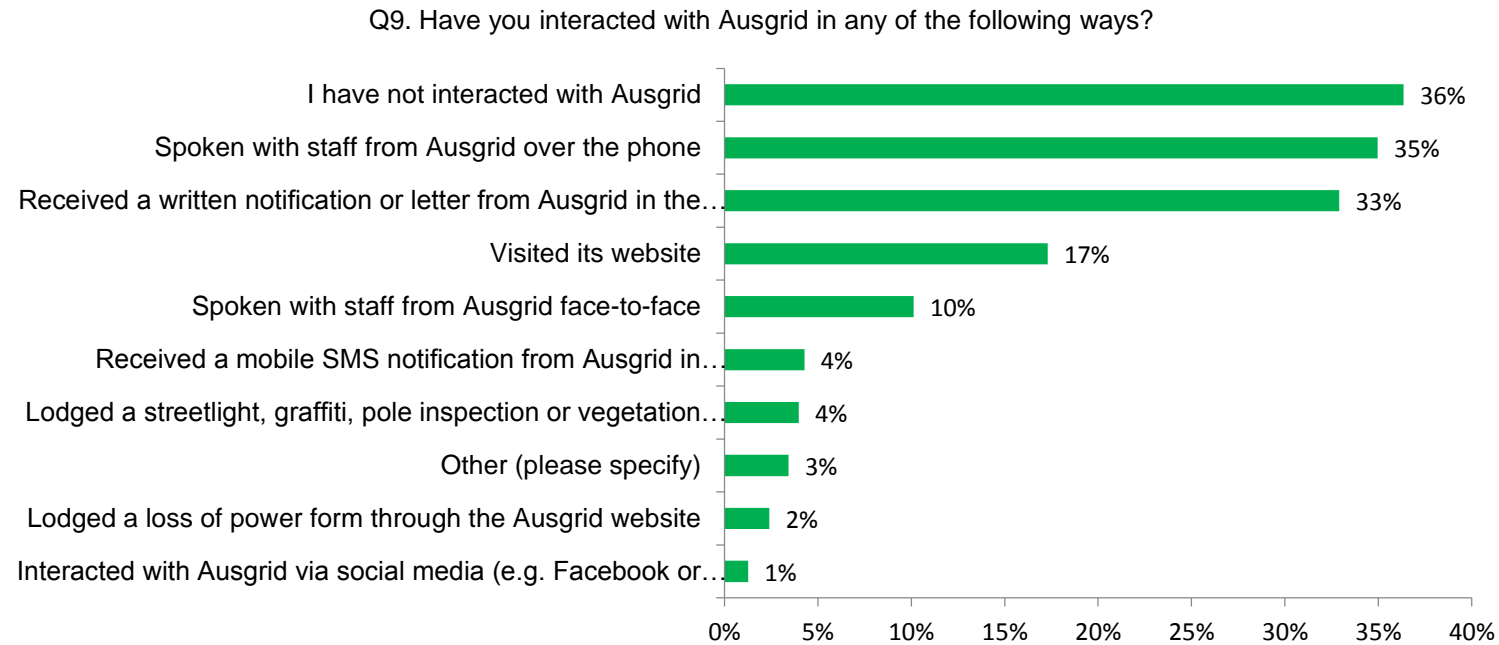


Our interactions have been good, but we were not contacted last night when power was out for several hours. As it happened, our son's feeding pump was charged up enough to sustain him through the blackout. It would have been nice to know how long the blackout was going to last so as to know if we need to take any action or not.

(n = 1,659 completed online responses, who answered Q10. * caution: low sample size of less than 25, therefore results should be considered as indicative only)

How Life Support Customers are currently interacting with Ausgrid

- The most common ways customers have interacted with Ausgrid have either been either over the phone or via postal mail (68%), with only 17% having visited our website and significantly less interacting via SMS (4%) or social media (1%).



(n = 1,659 completed online responses, who answered Q9.)

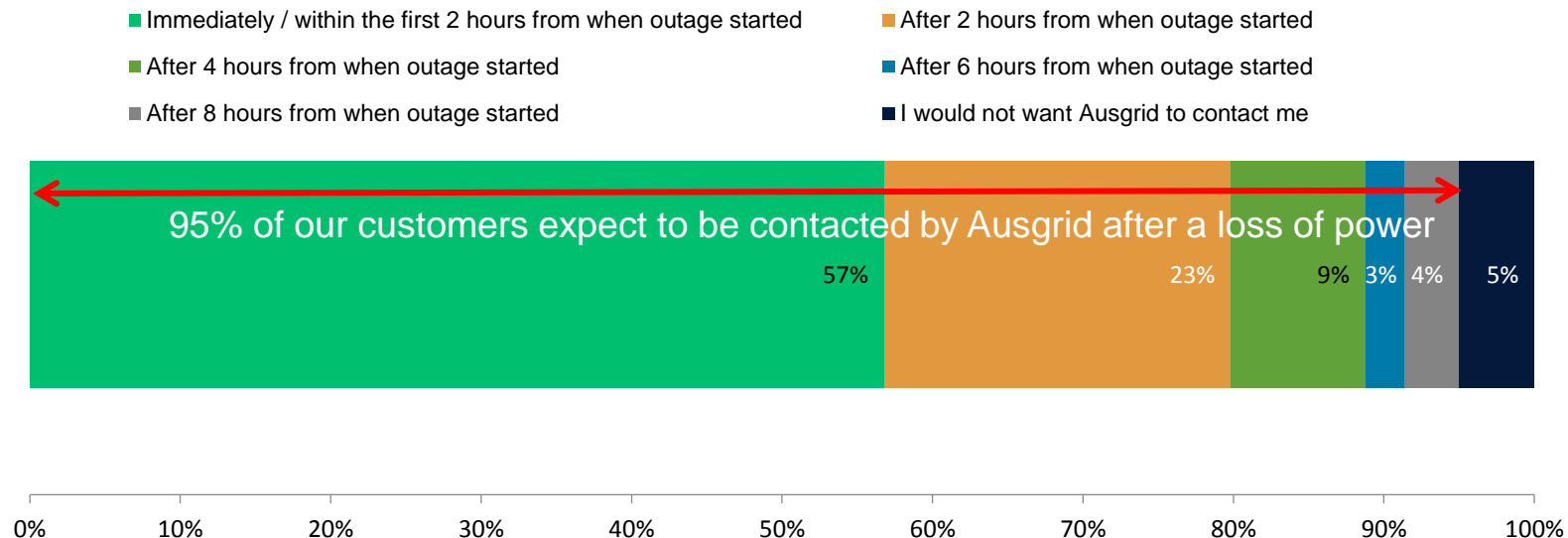


Customer Expectations during unplanned outages

What contact is expected – Unplanned Outages

- 95% of our customers expect to be contacted by Ausgrid after a loss of power.
- Just over half of our customers expect Ausgrid to contact them immediately to within the first 2 hours from when the outage started.

Q11. If you were to experience a loss of power supply in your area, how long after you have lost power would you expect Ausgrid to contact you?



"Real time Contact from Ausgrid during interruptions are essential".

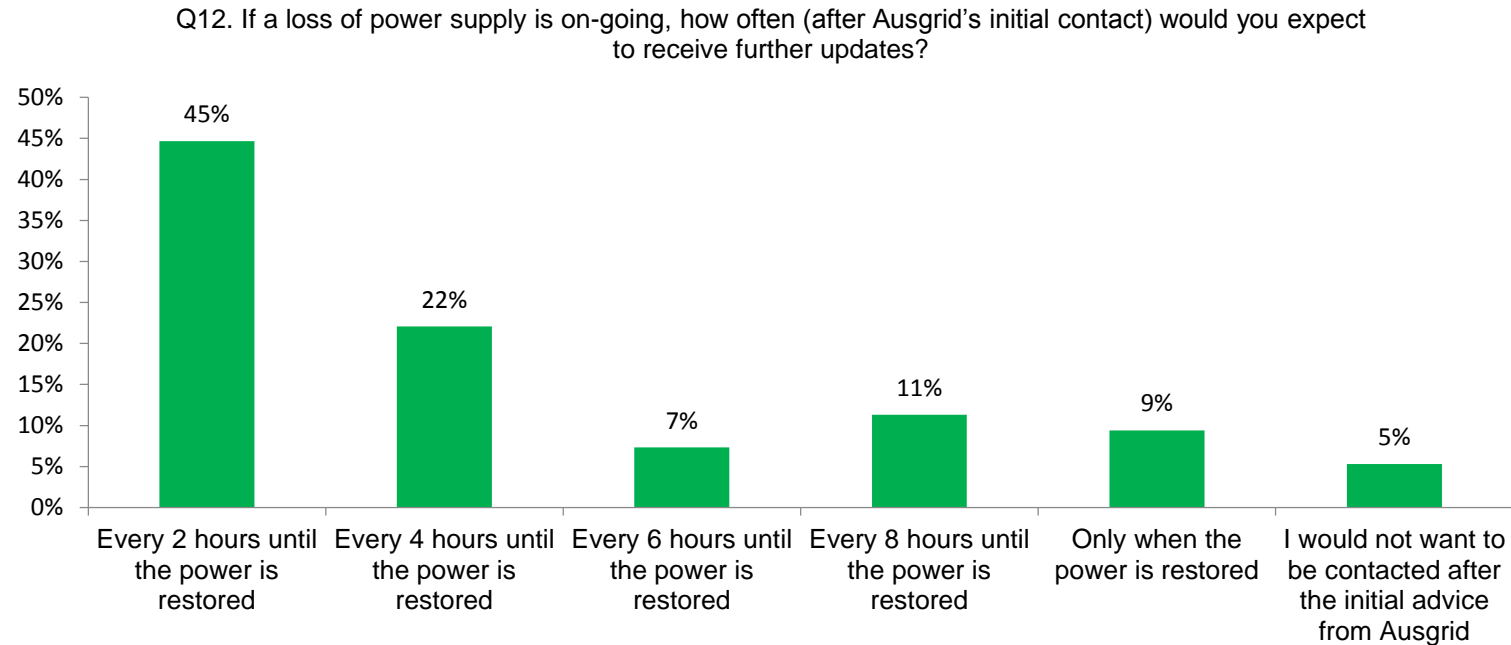
"I'm more concerned about unplanned outages than planned outages. When we have had any unplanned outages in our area we have never been contacted by anyone".

(n = 1,557 completed online responses, who answered Q11, excluding those who answered 'Other')

Communication preferences

– Frequency during unplanned outages

- Of those who expect contact, the majority of customers (45%) expect to be kept informed about their loss of power every 2 hours until power is restored. Any time longer than 4 hourly intervals was not as desirable amongst our life support customers.



"We need to be contacted as soon as possible by phone so other arrangements can be made".

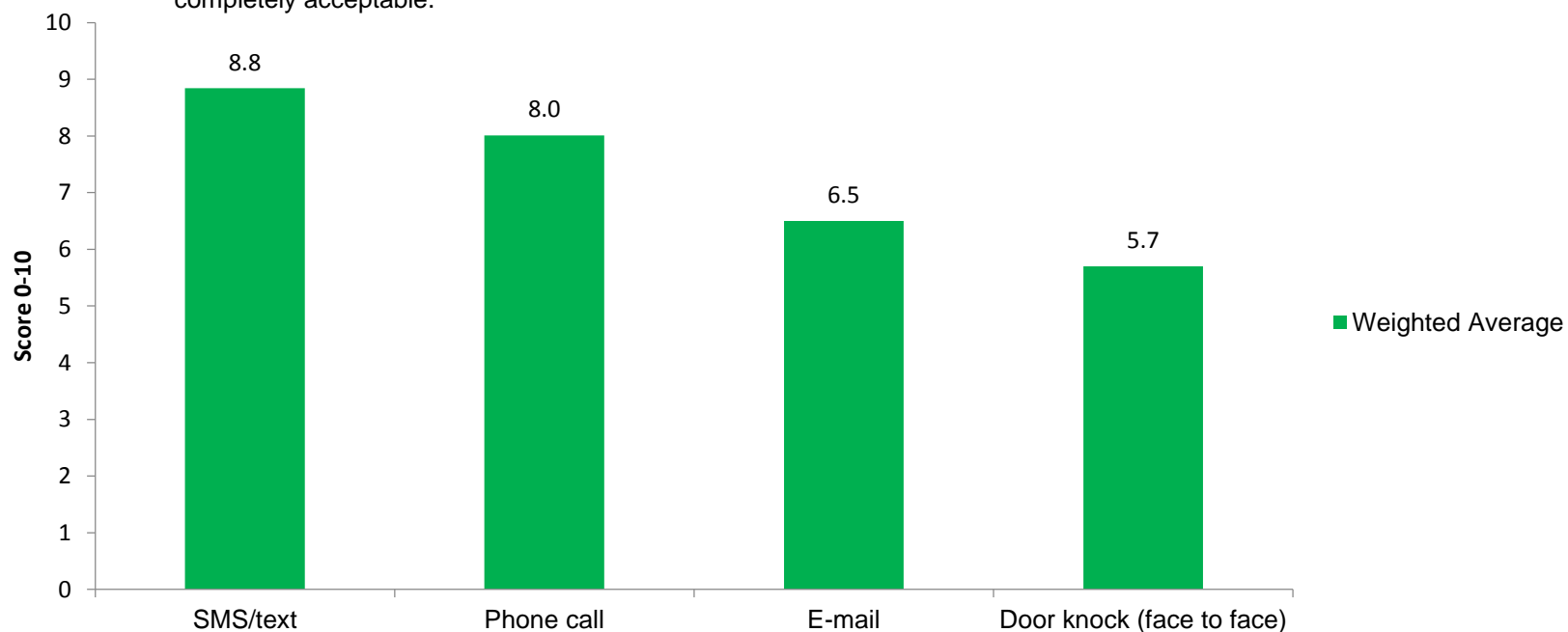
(n = 1,532 completed online responses, who answered Q12, excluding those who answered 'I would not want Ausgrid to contact me at any stage' or 'Other')

Preferred method of communication – Unplanned outages

- The most preferred method of communication during an unplanned outage amongst life support customers is by SMS/text notification followed by phone calls.

Q13. We would like your help to identify other contact options our life support customers may like us to implement in the future in the event of an unplanned loss of power.

Please rate the following methods of communication with 0 being completely unacceptable and 10 being completely acceptable.



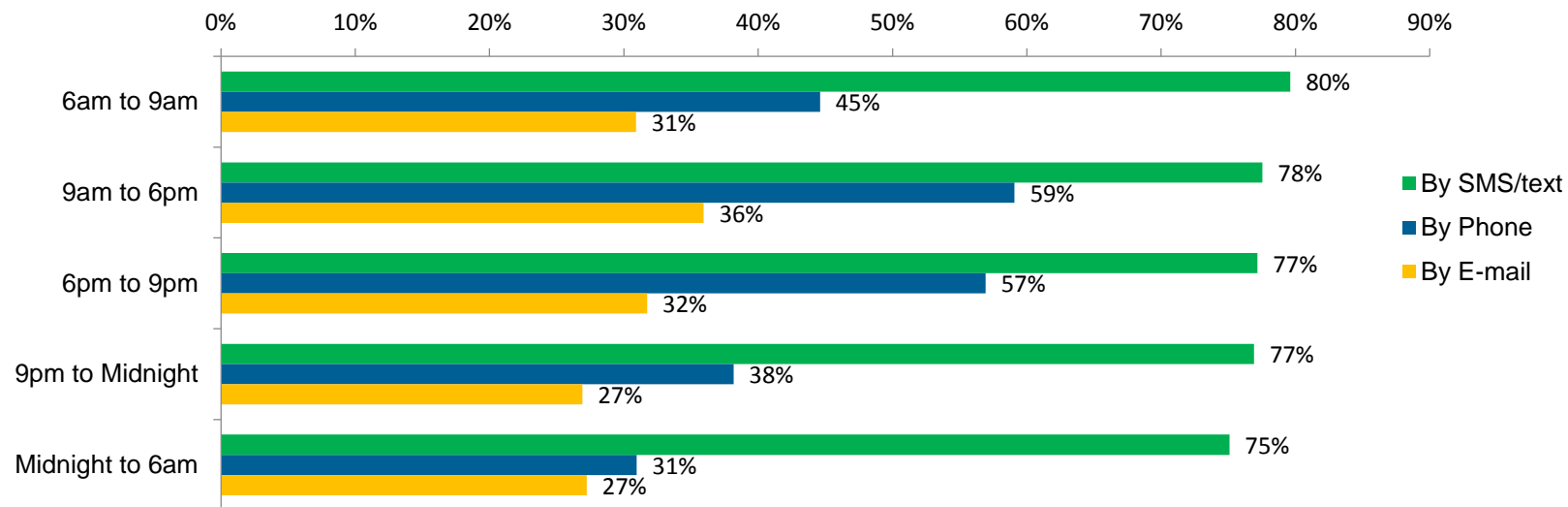
"Please set up SMS contact asap for unplanned outages".

(n = 1,659 completed online responses, who answered Q13.)

Communication Preferences – Time of day

- The most popular method of communication across all time periods day/night is by SMS/text, especially from 9pm until 6am when they may choose not to be disturbed.

Q14. An unplanned loss of power supply may occur at any time of the day or night. We would like your help to identify what you believe are appropriate times of the day for life support customers to hear from Ausgrid about a loss of power supply.



"Never had contact with Ausgrid. When power has gone off we have been able to switch to battery operated oxygen but at night may not realise power has gone off although concentrator emits alarm signal. A phone call would be helpful if we are asleep".

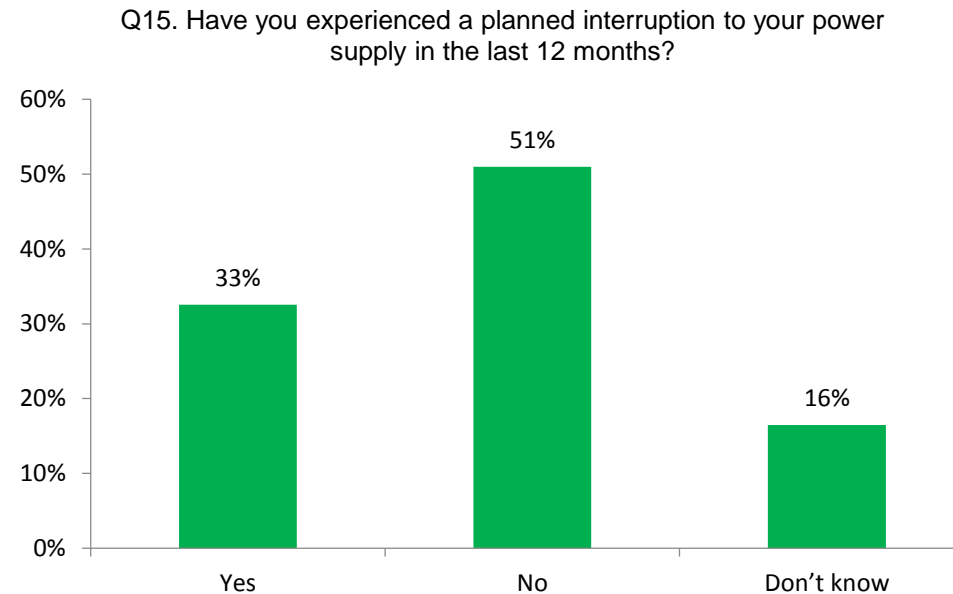
(n = 1,659 completed online responses, who answered Q14.)



Customer Expectations during planned outages

Life support customer experience – Planned outages

- 33% of life support customer respondents have experienced a planned outage in the last 12 months. The most common form of communicating this was via postal letter or a door knock with letter.

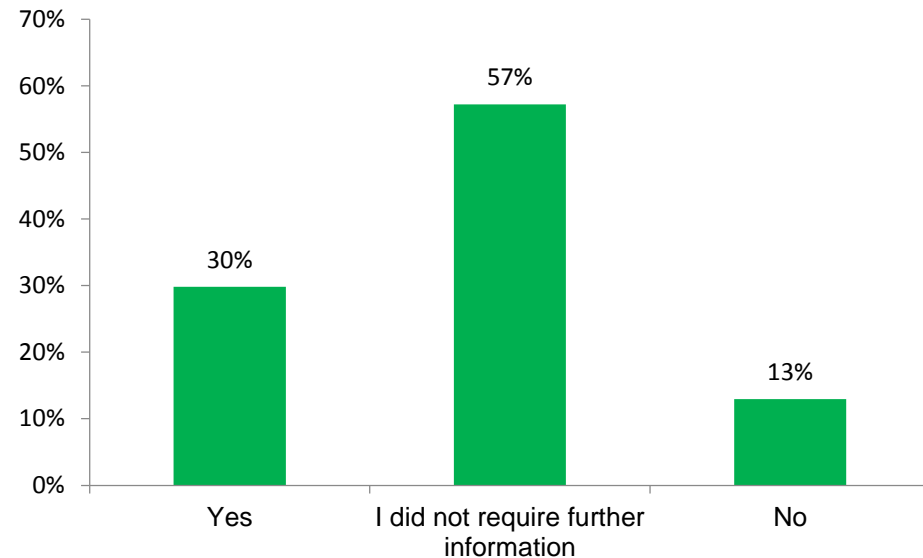


(n = 1,659 completed online responses, who answered Q15)

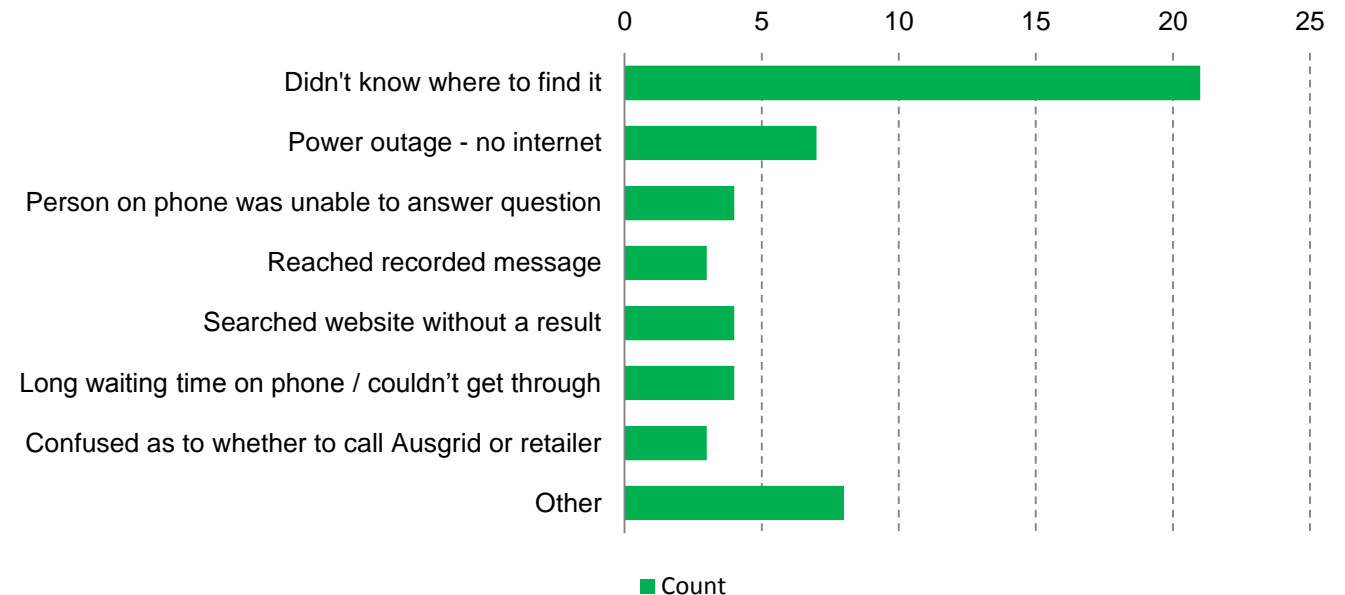
Life support customer experience – Planned outages

- 87% of those who looked for information about the planned interruption found it either easy to find information or didn't feel the need to seek further information.

Q17. If you wanted to find out more information about the planned interruption, was it easy to find? In no please specify why.



Q17 – No respondents
(The top reasons provided by “no” respondents)



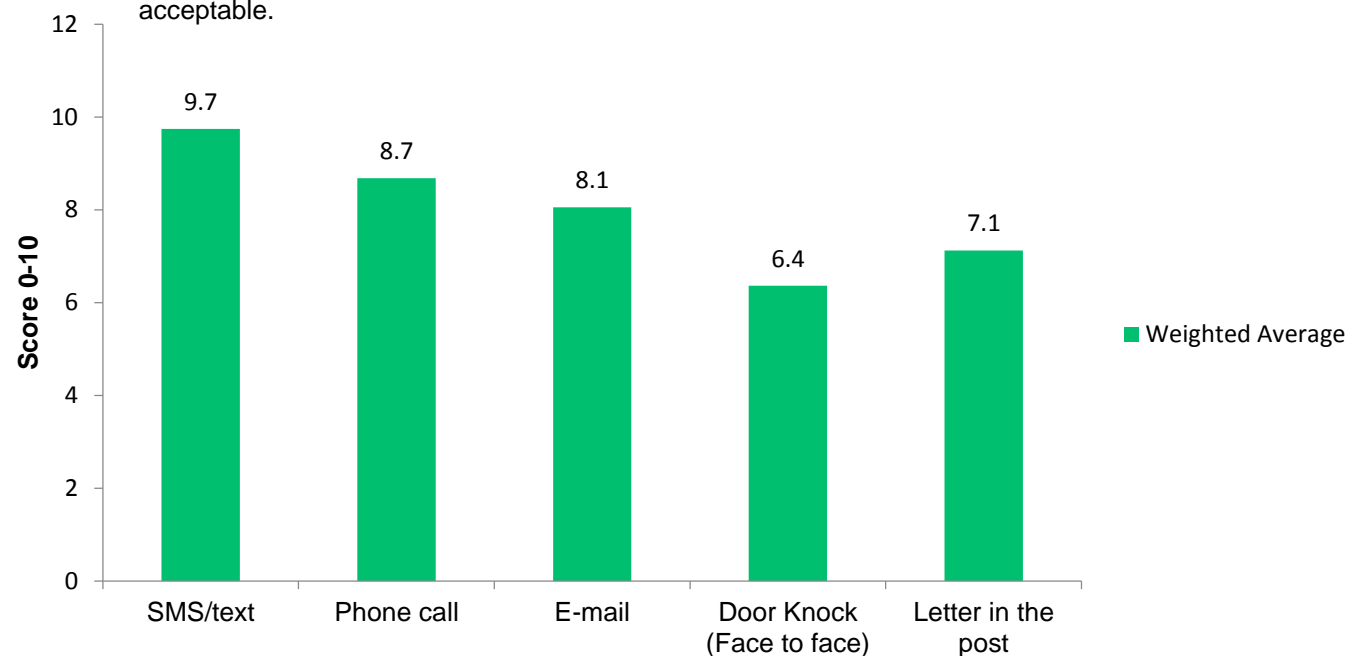
(n = 1,659 completed online responses, who answered Q15, n = 540 who have experienced a planned outage who answered Q17.)

Customer Communication preferences – Planned outages

- Life support customers expressed their first preference for SMS/mobile text as their preferred mode for being notified of planned outages, rating this mode as being completely acceptable (10). Door knocking scored the lowest on average.

Q 18. We would like your help to identify other contact options our life support customers may like us to consider implementing in the future during a planned power supply interruption.

Please rate the following methods with 0 being completely unacceptable and 10 being completely acceptable.

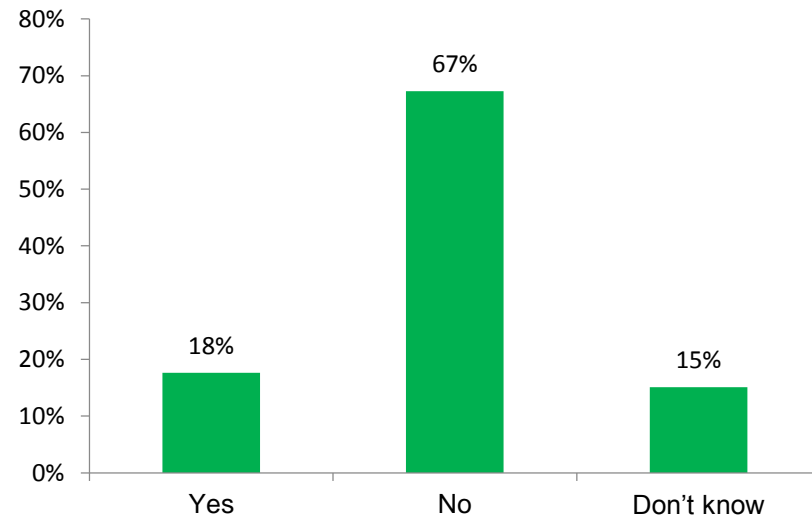


(n = 1,659 completed online responses, who answered Q18.)

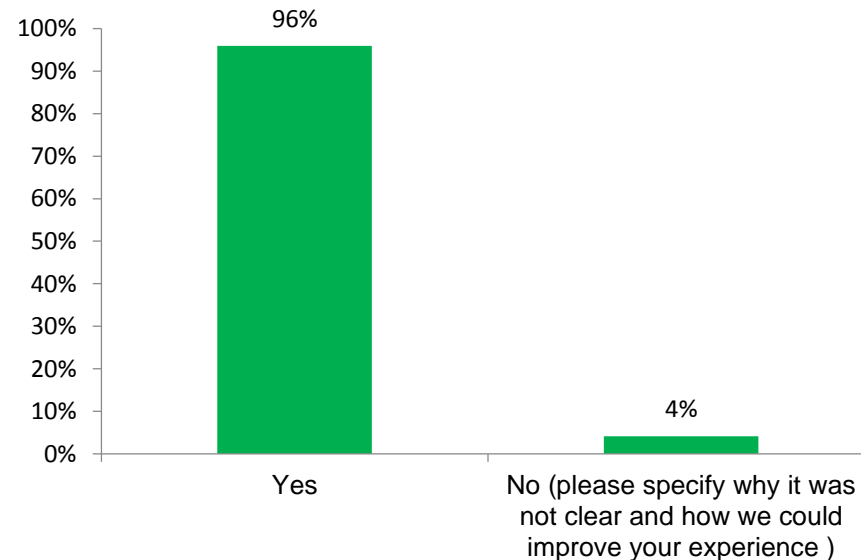
Precautionary notifications experience

- 18% of customers surveyed said that they had received a precautionary notification from Ausgrid in the last year.
- Of those customers who received a precautionary notification, 96% felt that the communication was clear.

Q19. Have you received a precautionary notification from Ausgrid in the last 12 months?



Q 20. Was the purpose of the precautionary notification made clear to you and did you feel comfortable with the information you were provided?



(n = 1,659 completed online responses, who answered Q19, 293 who received a precautionary note in the last year answered Q20.)

What is a Precautionary Notification?

If you are a registered life support customer and there is a planned power interruption in your neighbourhood, Ausgrid may contact you to advise that you are at risk of being impacted, even though you are not expected to lose power.

This is a precautionary notification and helps you to plan for unforeseen events causing a loss of power supply.



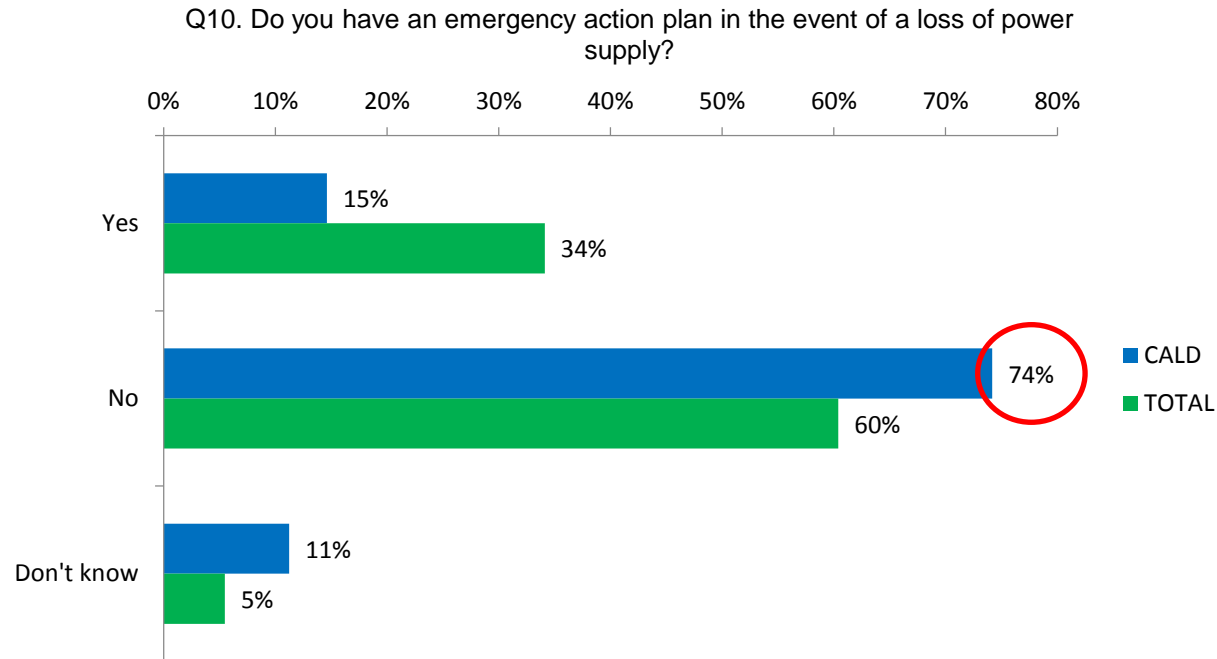
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Customers

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Customers (CALD) Key Insights

- Separate analysis was conducted on customers who speak a language other than English at home (CALD).
- The CALD customer group have a greater representation in the age groups between 35- 64, are more likely to be living in a couple with children or within an extended family household and working full time than the total life support customers.
- CALD customers are less likely to have a back up plan with 74% of customers stating they do not have an emergency action plan in place in the event of a loss of power.
- The CALD community have the same expectations as the total life support group for Ausgrid to contact them immediately / within 2 hours of an unplanned loss of power.
- Text messages are the preferred communication method with face to face the least preferred which is the same as the overall life support customer group. Acceptability of a phone call and email are rated equally by the CALD group whereas the total life support group rated a phone call as slightly more acceptable than email. This suggests a preference for written communication over verbal communication for the CALD customers.
- In considering contact options in the future for planned outages, CALD customers rated SMS as the most acceptable method of contact, which was the same as the general life support group.
- Of those who identified as speaking a language other than English at home, 86% prefer to read information in English.

CALD Life Support Customer Profile – Back up plans

- CALD customers are less likely to have a back up plan with 74% of customers stating they do not have an emergency action plan in place in the event of a loss of power.
- The CALD customers had a similar equipment profile as the total customer group.



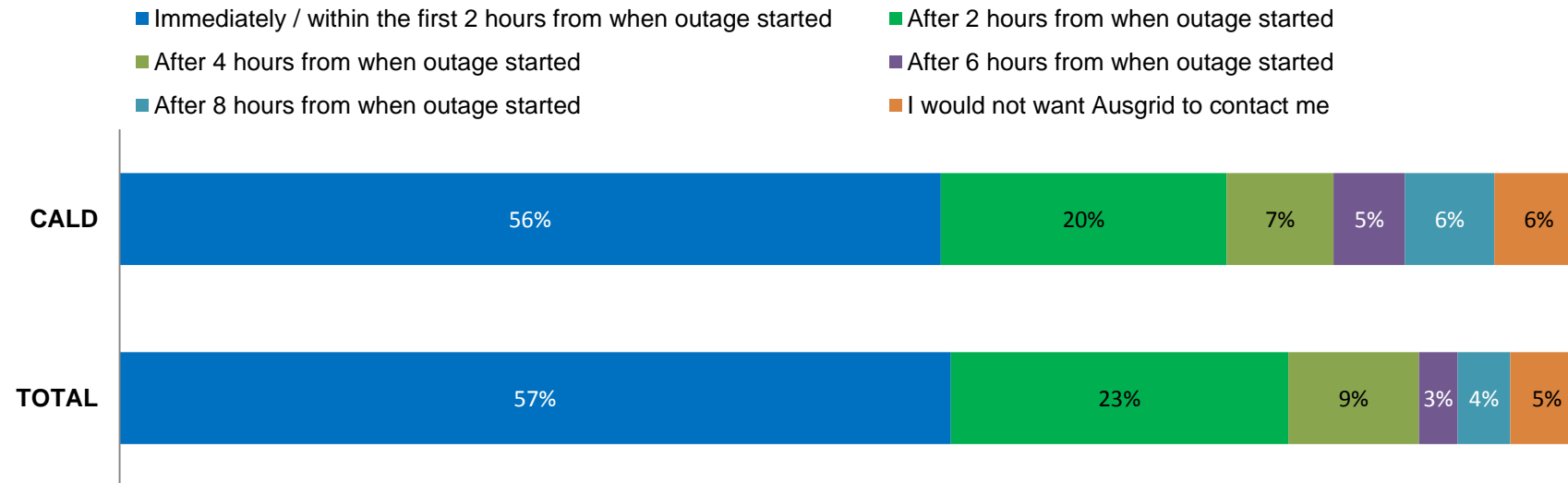
(n = 89, completed online responses, who answered English is a second language spoken at home)

CALD Customers - Unplanned Outages

What contact is expected

- The CALD community have the same expectations as the total life support group for Ausgrid to contact them immediately/within 2 hours of an unplanned loss of power.

Q11. If you were to experience a loss of power supply in your area, how long after you have lost power would you expect Ausgrid to contact you?



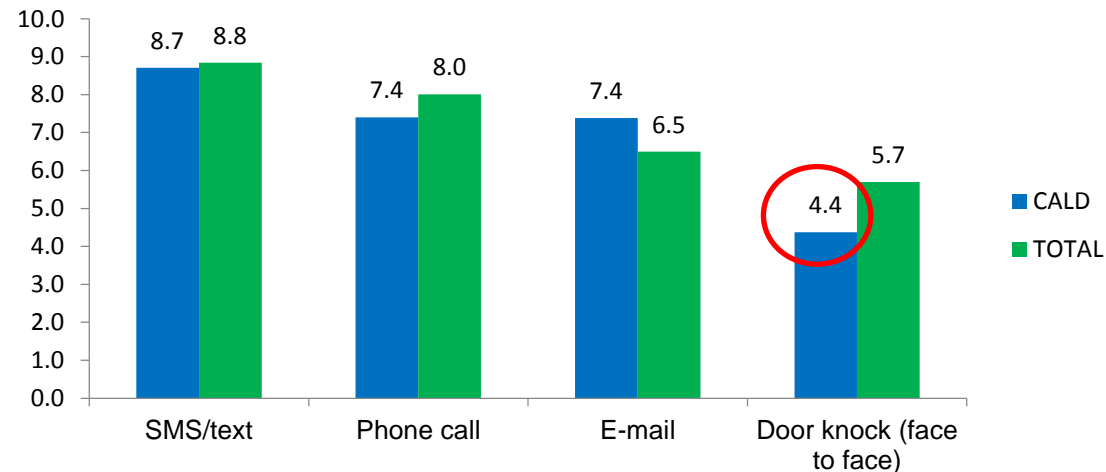
(n = 89, completed online responses, who answered English is a second language spoken at home)

CALD Customers

Preferred method of communication – Unplanned outages

- Text messages are the preferred communication method with face to face the least preferred. This is the same as the overall life support customer group.
- Acceptability of a phone call and email are rated equally by the CALD group whereas the total life support group rated a phone call as slightly more acceptable than email. This suggests a preference for written communication over verbal communication for the CALD customers.

Q13. We would like your help to identify other contact options our life support customers may like us to implement in the future in the event of an unplanned loss of power.



(n = 89, completed online responses, who answered English is a second language spoken at home, n = 1,659 total completed online responses)

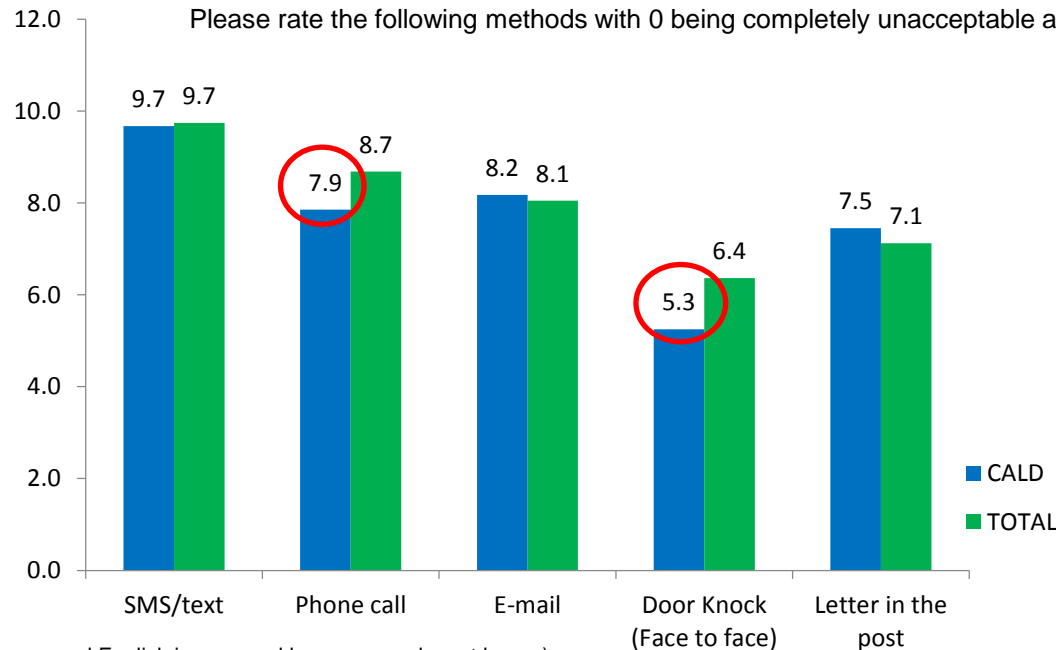
CALD Customers

Preferred method of communication – Planned outages

- CALD customers had similar preferences for communication during planned outages as the overall life support group. Similar to unplanned outages, SMS/text are rated as the most acceptable, with a slightly lower rating for phone calls and door knocking than the overall life support group.

Q18. We would like your help to identify other contact options our life support customers may like us to consider implementing in the future during a planned power supply interruption.

Please rate the following methods with 0 being completely unacceptable and 10 being completely acceptable.



(n = 89, completed online responses, who answered English is a second language spoken at home)

**Thank you to our
Life Support Customers who
participated in this research.**



Ausgrid



**Customers
at the Centre**