E Source study reveals increased focus on utility website accessibility in 2023

93 utilities participated in 2023 Website Benchmark; NIPSCO earned top spot
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Conducted every other year since 2002, the E Source Website Benchmark measures the user experience of utility websites accessed from mobile devices and desktop computers. The utility ranked highest in 2023 in the US and Canada is Northern Indiana Public Service Co. (NIPSCO), followed by SMUD.

These two utilities had the top scores overall, had the highest mobile and desktop scores overall, and ranked at the top for many of the components assessed in the study, like functionality and content.

E Source designed custom methodology based on industry trends in user experience and utility feedback for each of the study's four components: findability, functionality, content, and appearance.

- *Findability:* Percentage of successful attempts to find, average pages visited to find the feature, and average time to find the feature
- *Functionality:* The inclusion of critical features and functions that improve the website experience
- *Content:* The inclusion of critical content and formatting, the reading level of the content, and the steps required to reach the content
- *Appearance:* Average customer rating

To provide services online to all customers, utilities must offer digital tools that serve customers equitably, regardless of their background, abilities, language, or level of access to technology. These improvements promote self-service offerings that not only increase customer satisfaction but can also reduce operating costs when done successfully. The E Source market research team explains a few ways utilities are working to improve website access for all customers.

"Accessibility has become a focus for utilities to help customers with disabilities and limitations easily use their website." —Rachel Cooper, E Source

"Accessibility has become a focus for utilities to help customers with disabilities and limitations easily

use their website," says Rachel Cooper, director of Market Research for E Source. "In 2023, 14% of the utility web pages we tested met the highest Web Content Accessibility Guidelines standard of compliance. This is up from 9% in 2021 and 5% in 2019. While 14% is still a small percentage, more utilities are making accessibility a priority in their web design."

"The utility sector is prioritizing responsive website design. In 2023, 94% of utility web pages we reviewed were responsive, meaning the design of the website changes to best fit the screen size the customer is using," explains E Source senior analyst Jordan Ellison. "In 2019, the number of responsive websites in our study was 73%, and in 2021 it was 91%. As more customers are using mobile devices, utilities have evolved to offer a better mobile customer experience on their websites."

"We also saw an increase in the percentage of utilities offering non-English options. In 2023, 56% of utility websites we reviewed offered a non-English option. That's up from 45% in 2021 and 42% in 2019," reports E Source senior analyst Randal Brown. "Language can be a big barrier to online access for customers, and more utilities are responding to this need."

The 2023 Website Benchmark assessed the top 10 features (on both a mobile device and a desktop computer) of 93 US and Canadian utilities' websites between April and September 2023.

Rank	Utility	Score
1	Northern Indiana Public Service Co. (NIPSCO)	677
2	SMUD	668
3	Avista Utilities	648
4	SDG&E	643
4	Columbia Gas of Ohio	643
6	SRP	642
7	Wisconsin Public Service (on behalf of WEC Energy Group)	638
8	Colorado Springs Utilities	636
8	Eversource	636
10	AEP Ohio (on behalf of American Electric Power)	634
10	SoCalGas	634
12	SaskPower	633
13	Consumers Energy	632
14	Duke Energy	630
15	NV Energy*	629
16	Duquesne Light Co.	624
16	We Energies	624
18	PNM	622
18	PG&E	622
20	Tacoma Public Utilities	621
21	Alabama Power	620

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Rank	Utility	Score
22	Tucson Electric Power	619
23	Southern California Edison	618
23	Pedernales Electric Cooperative	618
25	Evergy	616
26	FortisBC	615
26	Con Edison (on behalf of Consolidated Edison)	615
28	Dominion Energy South Carolina	613
29	Otter Tail Power Co.	612
30	Madison Gas and Electric	610
31	CORE Electric Cooperative	609
32	Piedmont Natural Gas	607
33	CPS Energy*	606
34	Xcel Energy*	604
35	Peoples Gas	603
36	Enbridge Gas	601
37	Entergy Corp.*	600
37	OUC	600
39	Hydro-Québec	590
39	TXU Energy	590
41	Énergie NB Power	585
42	PSEG Long Island*	584
43	Black Hills Energy*	583
43	Memphis Light, Gas and Water	583
43	NorthWestern Energy	583
46	New Jersey Natural Gas*	581
46	CenterPoint Energy	581
46	OG&E*	581
46	Tampa Electric*	581
50	Arizona Public Service*	580
51	DTE Energy*	579
51	Huntsville Utilities	579
53	Dominion Energy Virginia	578
54	Ameren Illinois (on behalf of Ameren Corp.)*	576
55	Puget Sound Energy*	575
56	Austin Energy*	574
56	Exelon Utilities (based on ComEd’s website)*	574
58	UGI Utilities*	572

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Rank	Utility	Score
58	CDE Lightband*	572
60	Southern Company Gas*	571
60	Pacific Power (on behalf of PacifiCorp)*	571
60	Dominion Energy Ohio*	571
63	Nova Scotia Power*	569
64	Public Service Co. of Oklahoma*	568
64	Manitoba Hydro*	568
66	National Grid*	566
67	Toronto Hydro	565
68	Dominion Energy Utah	563
68	Omaha Public Power District*	563
68	Alliant Energy*	563
71	Georgia Power*	562
71	Lawrenceburg Utility Systems	562
73	MidAmerican Energy*	561
73	Kansas Gas Service* (on behalf of ONE Gas)*	561
73	BC Hydro*	561
76	Washington Gas*	557
76	Dominion Energy North Carolina - Gas*	557
78	FPL*	553
79	AES Ohio (formerly Dayton Power & Light)*	552
80	NW Natural*	551
81	New Mexico Gas Co.*	543
82	West Penn Power* (on behalf of FirstEnergy)*	541
83	Central Maine Power* (on behalf of Avangrid)*	536
83	Liberty	536
85	Southwest Gas Corp.*	532
86	Spire Inc.*	531
87	LG&E and KU*	526
88	Los Angeles Department of Water and Power*	502
89	Bowling Green Municipal Utilities*	500
90	ENMAX*	495
91	Starkville Utilities*	491
92	Columbia Power and Water Systems*	478
93	Loudon Utilities	470

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