

# STAND ALONE POWER SYSTEMS (SAPS)

Customer Survey Report

July 2021

Prepared for Ausgrid

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings from an online survey to understand the views of Ausgrid's customers regarding its Stand-Alone Power System (SAPS) concept. Fieldwork was conducted in April and May 2021, with participants invited by postal mail-out and incentivised via a chance to win a monetary prize.

To enable participants to provide a realistic assessment of the suitability of SAPs for their situation, they were asked to answer the survey about a specific site address that they own or rent. Responses were received from n=77 customers, representing a 4% response rate.

**Please note, this research was conducted during a period of severe flooding in some of the areas included in the research. This may have had some negative impact on response rates and to have slightly elevated the importance of storm damage in the concerns participants raised.**

## The Participants In Focus

- The n=77 participants came from a mix of regions across the postcode areas specified by Ausgrid.
- The majority of participants (73%) were asked about a residential site address. The remainder of participants operated a business from the site address.
- Median site size is 40 acres, with the maximum size of 1,800 acres and a minimum size of 0.25 acres (excluding outliers).
- Almost all participants own their site, and the majority (77%) think they will be at their site address for at least another five years.

## Electricity Use At The Site Addresses

- Almost all participants (92%) use electricity at their site address throughout the year and, for almost half, this is constant, year-round.
- One-third of participants have solar PV at their site address and half already have a generator. One-in-ten currently have a battery.

## Electricity Supply Reliability

- Perceptions of network reliability are mixed.
- Storms and bushfires were by far the main reason given for issues with supply reliability, with remoteness and lack of maintenance also mentioned.
- Many of those surveyed (62%) are very concerned about losing power at their site due to storms or bushfires and half think impacts from natural events will increase over time.

## Familiarity With Off-Grid Power Systems

- The terms 'Off-grid Power System' and 'Standalone Power System (SAPS)' were tested with participants to assess awareness and comprehension.
- Three-quarters have heard of off-grid systems and know something about them and just under half have heard of the term 'Standalone Power System (SAPS)'.

## Reactions To Standalone Power Systems (SAPS) Concept

- After reading the detailed information about the SAPS offer, there is a very high level of interest in finding out more, with almost half rating their interest as 10 out of 10.
- Those who are most interested in SAPS value the fact they will have a reliable supply and can be grid independent.



# INTRODUCTION

Background & Methodology

# PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Ausgrid is trialling Stand Alone Power Systems (SAPS) with selected customers living in fringe-of-grid areas of Ausgrid's network. The program aims to explore how SAPS can provide an alternative electricity supply solution that improves reliability and safety of our service to remote and rural customers, as well as being sustainable and cost-effective. For further information on the program visit: [www.ausgrid.com.au/standalonepower](http://www.ausgrid.com.au/standalonepower)

Ausgrid's SAPS trial will be developed as a local solution for electricity supply to remote customers. The trial will help Ausgrid, selected customers and the wider community understand the multiple benefits that SAPS can provide. The key objectives of the trial include:

- understanding how the installation of a SAPS could improve reliability and resilience during storm or bushfire events for identified participants;
- determining the cost savings to customers and the community as a result of not having to operate, repair and maintain remote parts of the distribution network; and
- understanding how to deliver a positive outcome and experience for customers supplied with SAPS to guide any future potential rollout.

The research presented in this report was undertaken during the development phase of the trial to build understanding of customers' attitudes and behaviours, assess the level of interest in the SAPS offering, shape the offering going forward, and inform decision-making around trial participant/site selection.

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY



## Approach

- ◆ **Online survey**
- ◆ **Recruitment:** Participants were recruited from a mailout to 1912 postal addresses of customers living in remote areas provided by Ausgrid. Each invitee received a unique URL link in their letter that linked to the site address that they were asked about in the survey. The site address was referenced in the invite and the on the survey landing page.



## Sample Size

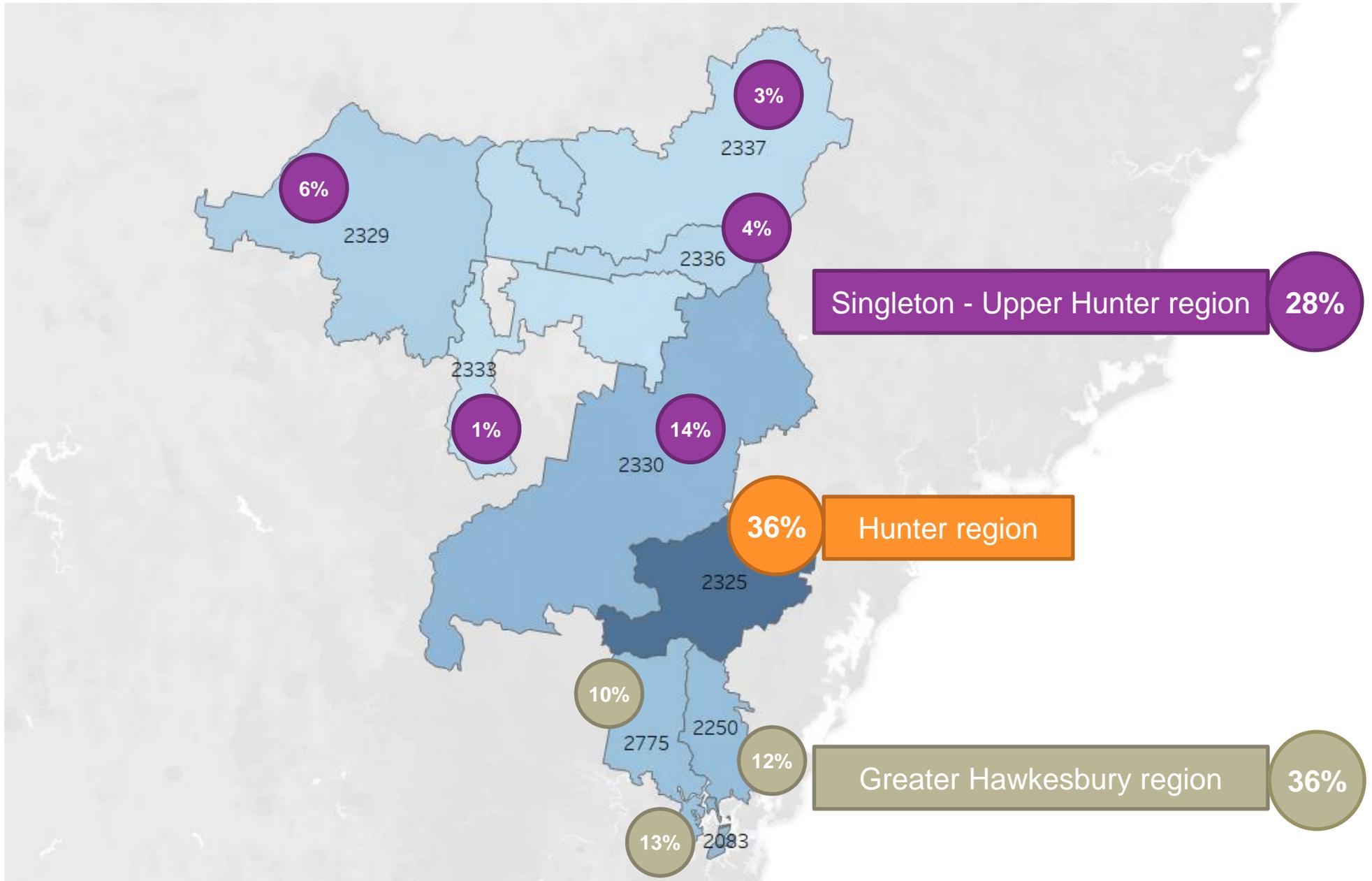
- ◆ n=77. Representing a 4% response rate.
- ◆ Margin of error: +/- 11.2% (95% confidence level).



## Notes to the reader

- ◆ Survey questions and sample bases are shown at the bottom of each page.
- ◆ Results may not always total 100% due to rounding or multiple-response questions.

# WHERE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS ARE LOCATED



# DETAILED RESULTS



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# PERCEPTIONS OF CURRENT NETWORK SUPPLY RELIABILITY

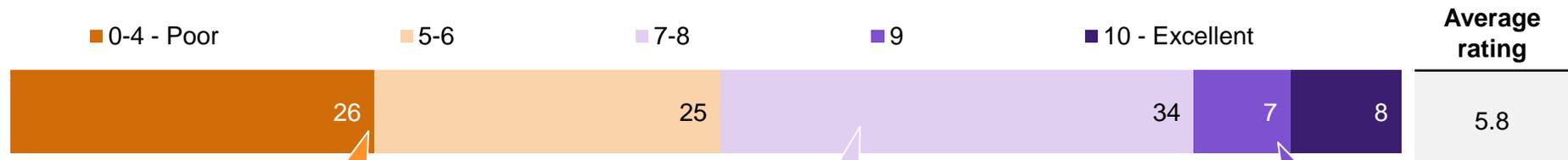


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# PERCEPTIONS OF CURRENT NETWORK SUPPLY RELIABILITY

Perceptions of network reliability are mixed, with those providing lower ratings talking about frequent and long-term interruptions to supply, and those providing a higher rating citing no major issues, minimal unplanned outages and good 'power company' communication when they do.

Perceptions of network electricity supply reliability(%)



## RATIONALE FOR RATING (Vs. those giving a different rating)

### POOR RATINGS OF 0-6 (n=39)

- **Frequent loss of supply** / outages / brown outs / surges / black outs (82% vs. 30% who rated higher\*)
- **Power can be out for days** after a storm (54% vs. 16%\*)
- **Unreliable and vulnerable** supply. The slightest reason causes blackouts and outages (31% vs. 11%)

### FAIR RATINGS OF 7-8 (n=26)

- **Frequent loss of supply** (42% vs. 64% who gave another rating\*)
- Supply has been **generally reliable** (35% vs. 10%)
- **Occasional outages** mostly caused by natural phenomena (bushfires/storms) (27% vs. 14%)

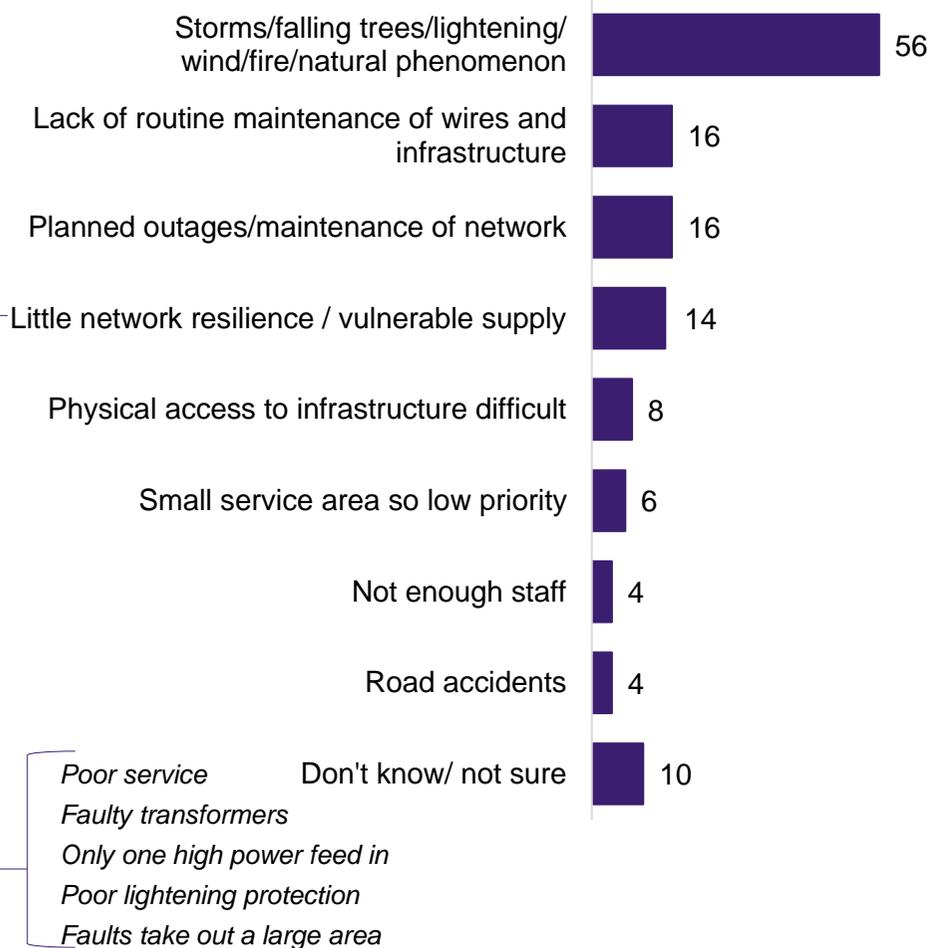
### HIGH RATINGS OF 9-10 (n=11)

- **No major issues.** Occasional outages caused by natural phenomenon (bushfires/storms) (64% vs. 11% who rated lower\*)
- **Minimal unplanned outages** / planned outages always to schedule (55% vs. 3%\*)
- **Fewer outages than previously** experienced (45% vs. 5%\*)
- **Good communication from power company** in an outage (27% vs. 2%\*)

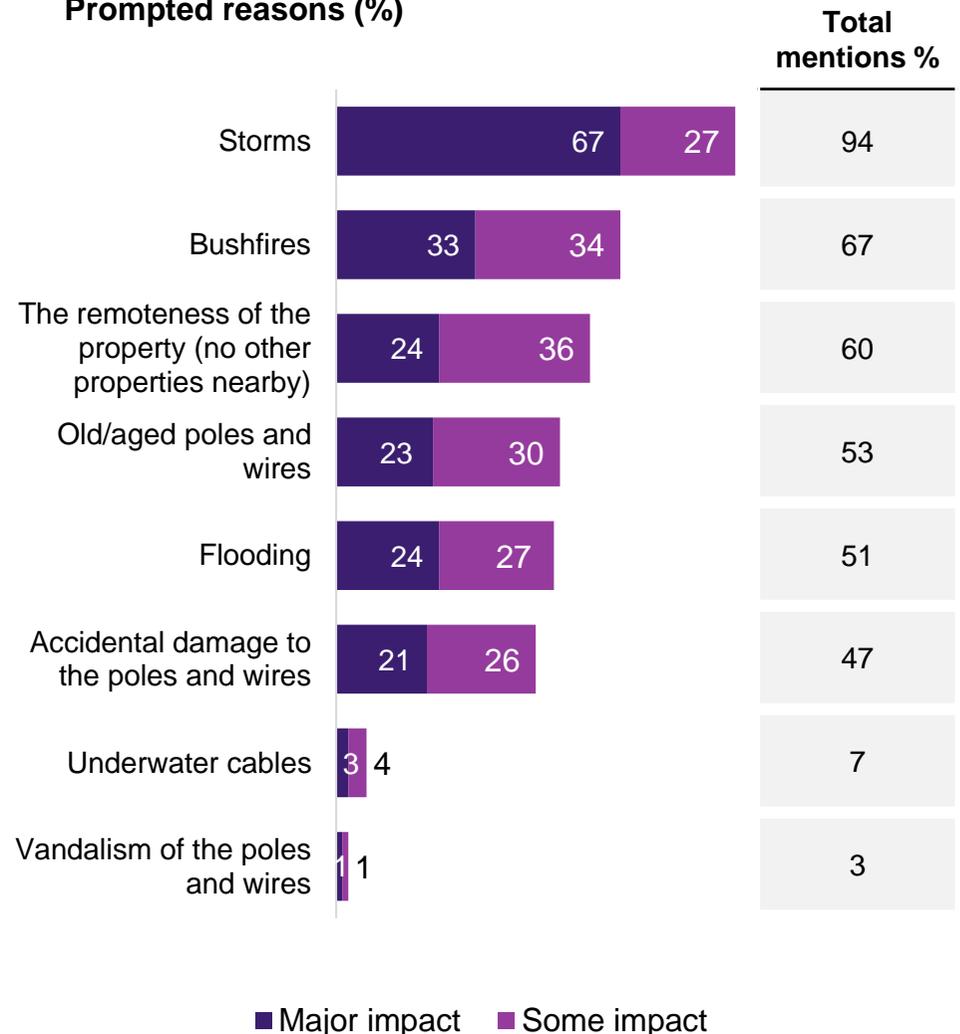
# REASONS FOR LESS THAN PERFECT SUPPLY RELIABILITY

Natural phenomena, such as storms and bushfires were by far the main reason given for issues with supply reliability, with issues relating to remoteness and lack of maintenance following behind. Flooding is an issue for half.

## Spontaneous mentions (%)



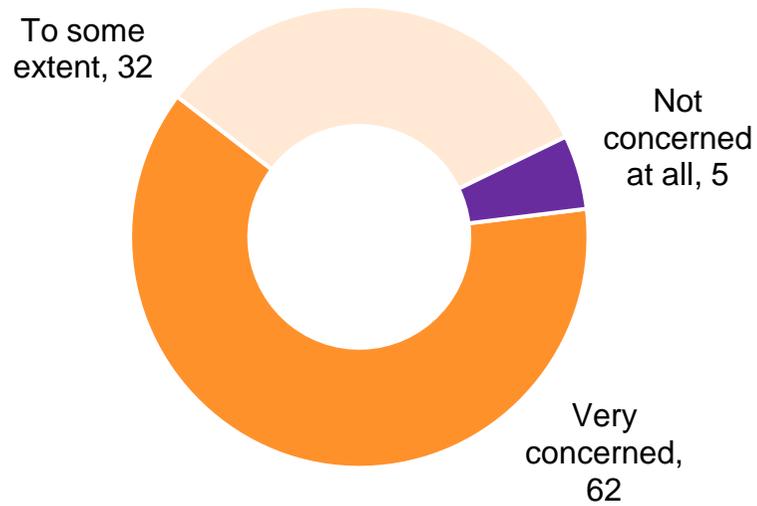
## Prompted reasons (%)



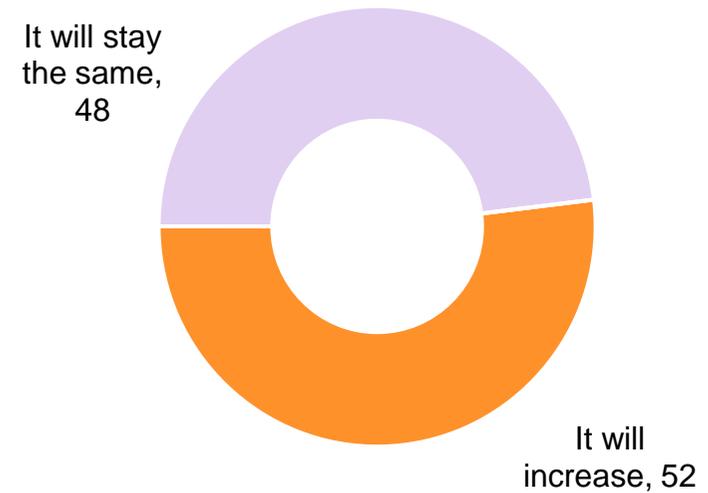
# LEVEL OF CONCERN ABOUT LOSING POWER AT THE PROPERTY

The vast majority of those surveyed are very concerned about losing power at their site due to storms or bushfires and half think the impacts from these natural events will increase over time.

Level of concern about losing power at property due to storms/bushfires (%)



Expectations around storms and bushfires impacting electricity supply (%)





# STAND ALONE POWER SYSTEM (SAPS) CONCEPT EVALUATION



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# INTEREST IN THE SAPS CONCEPT (AFTER SEEING DESCRIPTION)

After reading the concept, there is a high level of interest in finding out more. Those who are most interested value the fact they will have a reliable supply and can be grid independent. Those least interested are distrustful of its reliability, concerned about potential costs, its size and visual appeal.

## Interest in SAPS after reading the detailed description (%)



### RATIONALE FOR RATING (Vs. those giving a different rating)

#### LOWER RATINGS OF 0-8 (n=30)

##### Main reasons against:

- **Not the best solution / not reliable enough** (20% vs. 2% of those giving a higher rating\*)
- No knowledge of **ongoing costs** (13% vs. 0%\*)
- **Ugly / unsightly / eyesore** (10 vs. 0%)
- **Don't have a suitable location** for it (10% vs. 7%)
- **Too big and bulky** (7% vs. 0%)

#### HIGHER RATINGS OF 9-10 (n=45)

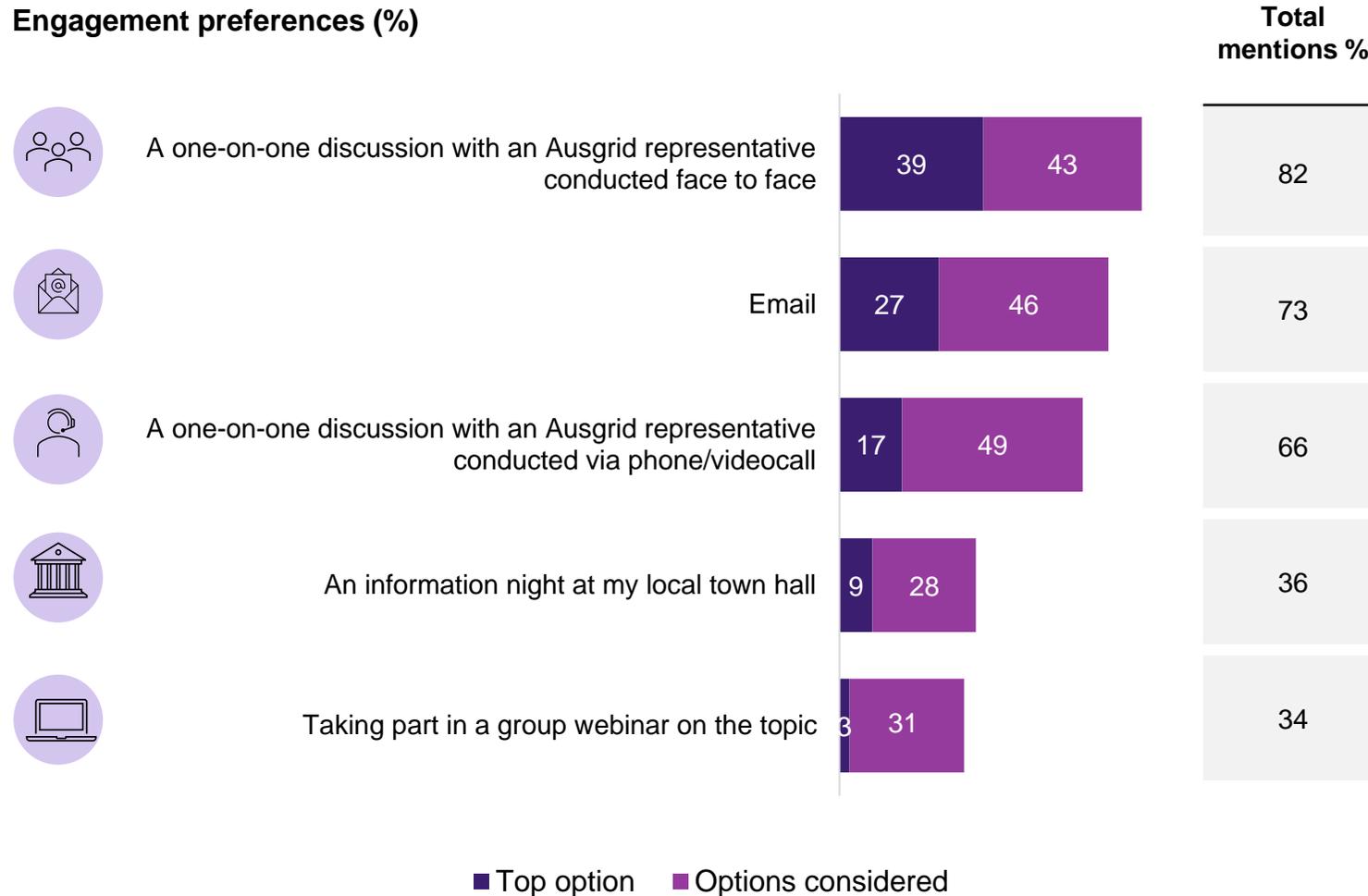
##### Main reasons for:

- **Reassurance of a stable power supply** (51% vs. 17% of those giving a lower rating\*)
- **Good idea** (18% vs. 13%)
- Become **independent of the grid** (16% vs. 0%\*)
- **Interested in new technology** (9% vs. 0%)
- **Good as a back up / alternative** (9% vs. 7%)
- **Reduces carbon emissions** (environmentally friendly) (9% vs. 7%)

# PREFERENCES FOR FURTHER ENGAGEMENT ABOUT SAPS

The most preferred method of ongoing engagement about SAPS are one-on-one discussions with an Ausgrid representative conducted face to face (39% selected this as their top option), while email and phone or video calls were somewhat appealing.

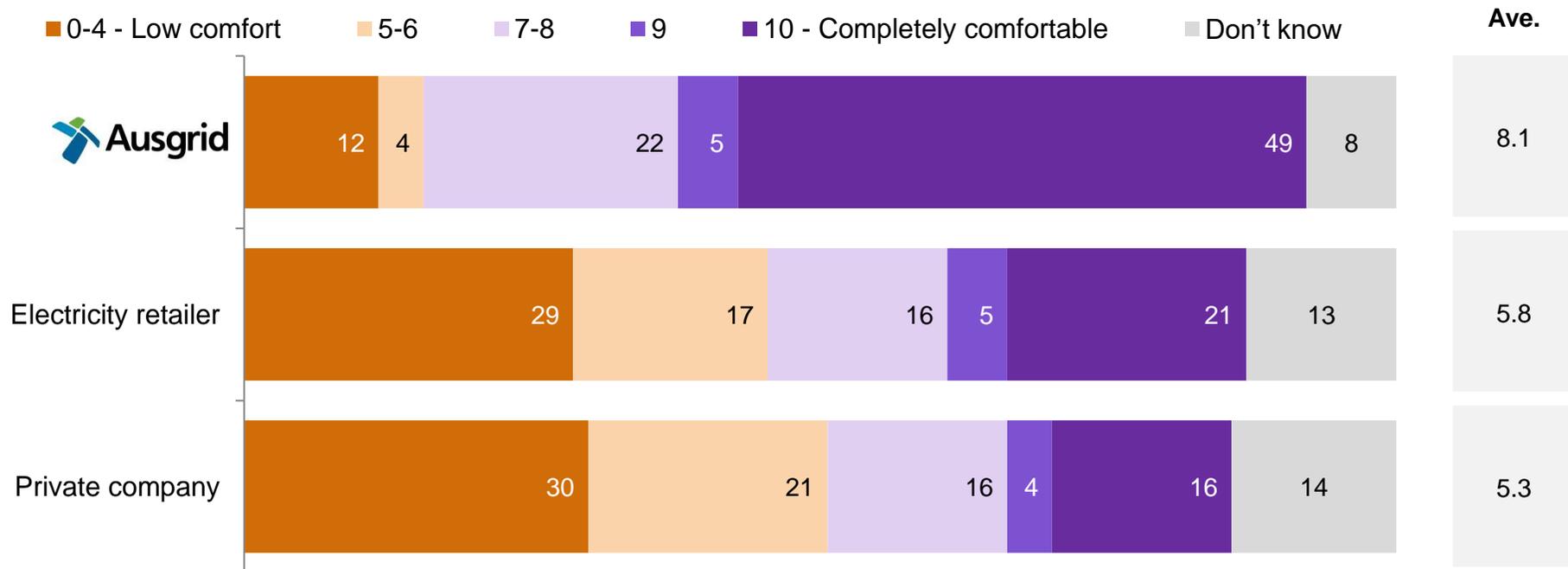
## Engagement preferences (%)



# SAPS PROVIDER PREFERENCES

Customers feel most comfortable with Ausgrid providing a SAPS solution (49% rating themselves 'completely comfortable'), compared to their retailer (21%) or a private company (16%).

Rating of comfort in different organisations providing SAPS (%)



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