2025 Customer Satisfaction Survey

Results and Analysis for the IPA

July 2025

Illinois Shines | IPA ILLINOIS POWER AGENCY

Energy Solutions
Program Administrator

Purpose

The Illinois Shines Customer Satisfaction Survey is intended to obtain insights from customers about their experiences navigating the process to participate in Illinois Shines.

The specific goals of the surveys are :

- To understand customers' experiences working with Illinois Shines participating entities for their projects.
- To gain insight into the level of understanding customers have about the Illinois Shines program.
- To provide customers with an avenue to provide written feedback to the Program Administrator about their experiences with participating entities.
- To invite and identify customers willing to more fully discuss their program experiences with the Program Administrator, individually or as a part of a small group.

In addition, because the 2025 survey followed a pilot customer satisfaction survey conducted in early 2024, the Program sought to measure how customer satisfaction may have changed as compared to the pilot survey sample.

Audience

Beginning in late February 2025, the Survey was sent to 19,968 Small Distributed Generation ("DG") customers whose Illinois Shines applications were submitted, verified, and paid, and the project energized, allowing respondents to provide a complete project perspective. The audience was composed of Purchase, Lease, and Power Purchase Agreement ("PPA") customers whose projects were invoiced after December 1, 2023 (to avoid any overlap with pilot Customer Satisfaction Survey respondents), and invoiced prior to November 27, 2024, which is 90 days before the survey was issued.

Survey Logistics

The Program Administrator developed, deployed, analyzed, and reported on the survey. The customized survey was issued using Microsoft Forms.

Timing

- February 7, 2025: Information about the upcoming Customer Satisfaction Survey was included in a Program announcement and was included in subsequent weekly announcements.
- February 24, 2023, through March 4, 2025: Initial survey emails were sent to customers in batches.
- March 5-13, 2025: An email reminder was sent to customers who had not yet provided responses to the survey.
- March 17-24, 2025: A final email reminder was sent to customers who had not yet responded.
- March 24, 2025: Deadline for survey completion.

Analysis and Results

Section One below provides results and analysis of the survey responses, including the distribution of responses, distribution of satisfaction scores for each question, general insights from the survey responses, and free text comments provided by customers.

The Role of CSAT (Customer Satisfaction Score)

We used the CSAT (customer satisfaction score) Metric to demonstrate customer satisfaction. CSAT is a metric that indicates how satisfied customers are with a company's products or services. It is measured through customer feedback and expressed as a percentage (A 75% CSAT score indicates 75% of respondent Strongly Agee or Agree to a question).

All satisfaction-oriented questions in the survey prompted respondents to use the following 1 to 5 scale:

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

Purchase surveys included 10 satisfaction-oriented questions while Lease and PPA survey included 13 satisfaction-oriented questions, with these three additional questions pertaining directly to their Lease and PPA agreements. Question 9 concerning customers' feedback and use of the Program website contained an additional "N/A" option for customers who had not yet visited the website.

We calculated the CSAT score using the responses of 4 (satisfied) and 5 (very satisfied), and the following formula:

(Number of satisfied customers (4 and 5) / Number of survey responses) x 100 = % of satisfied customers

Using the two highest values on feedback surveys is the most accurate predictor of satisfaction. By utilizing the CSAT score, we can more accurately benchmark customer satisfaction year over year.

Section One: Summary of Findings

The 2025 Illinois Shines Customer Satisfaction Survey began distribution to Small DG Purchase, Lease and PPA customers on February 24, 2025. **The survey had a response rate of 11% (2,163/19,968); the overall customer satisfaction score was 64%.***

The 2,163 respondents include 1,800 Purchase customers, 356 Lease customers, and seven PPA customers.

Due to the low sample size of PPA responses which may not reflect the average PPA customer's experience, most data and analysis presented here is for Purchase and Lease customers, with the following notes:

- PPA responses are included in the overall CSAT score for each of the questions in Section Two.
- However, supplemental figures in Section Two and analysis in Section Four primarily focus on Purchase and Lease customer responses.
- Questions 11-13 were only provided to Lease and PPA customers.

Section Two: Customer Satisfaction Survey Results:

(Based on the responses of 2,163 Program participants)**

1. **Before I signed my installation contract, my solar company helped me develop a clear understanding of my project and how the Illinois Shines Program works.**

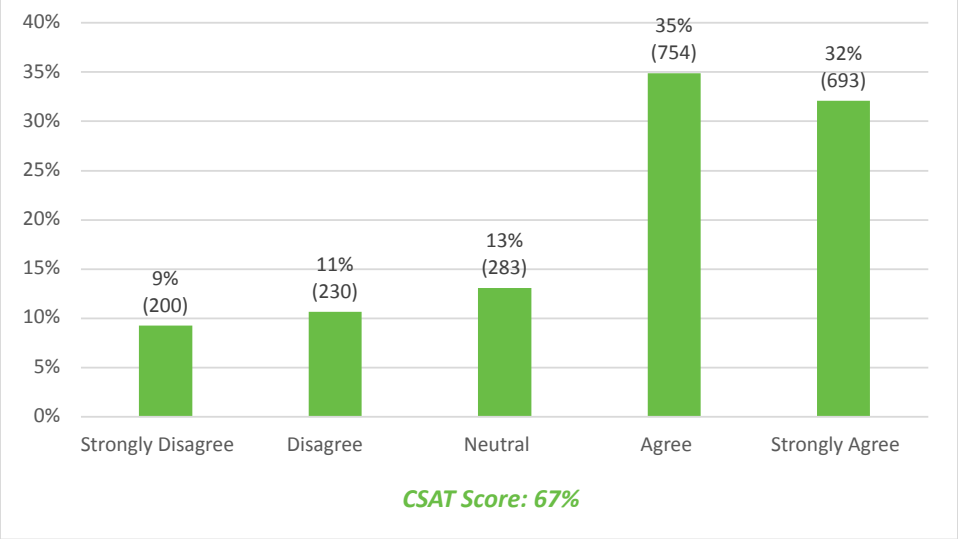

Figure 1A: Overall CSAT Score for Question 1

* The overall CSAT score is calculated by dividing the total responses received for Strongly Agree and Agree (14,459) by the total number of responses (22,610) to all 13 questions asked in this survey.

** Note: for each of the following charts, the cumulative percentages of all individual bars may equal 99% or 101%, and the CSAT Score may be 1% off the combined Agree/Strongly Agree percentages, due to rounding of individual response percentages to the nearest whole percent.

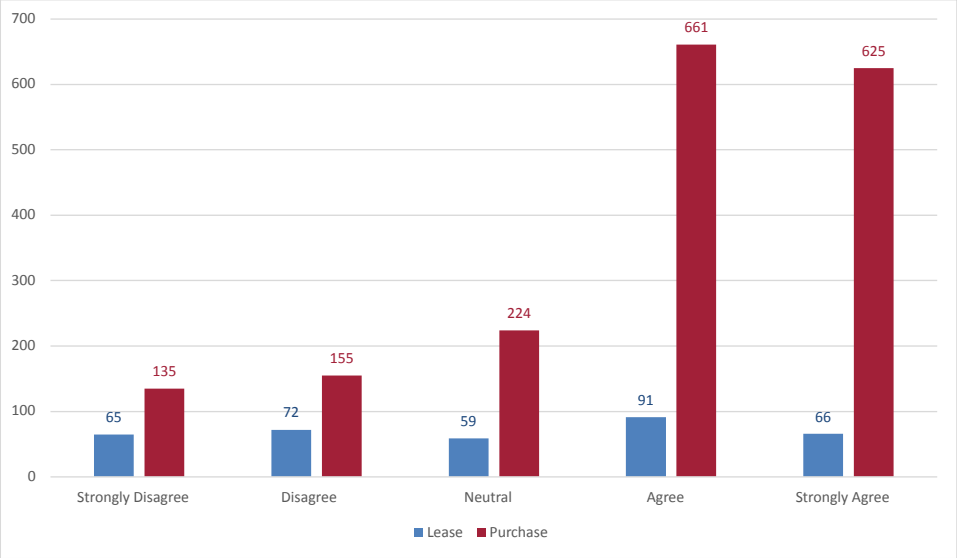

Figure 1B: Lease and Purchase responses for Question 1

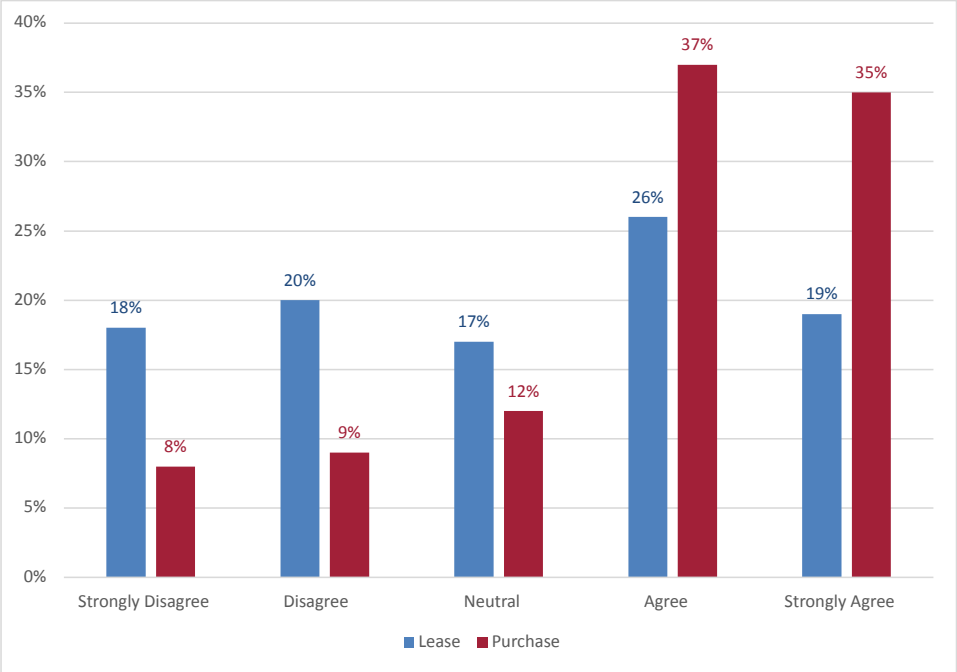

Figure 1C: Percentage of responses for Lease and Purchase customers for Question 1

2. Before I signed my installation contract, my solar company helped me understand any economic benefits I would receive from participating in Illinois Shines.

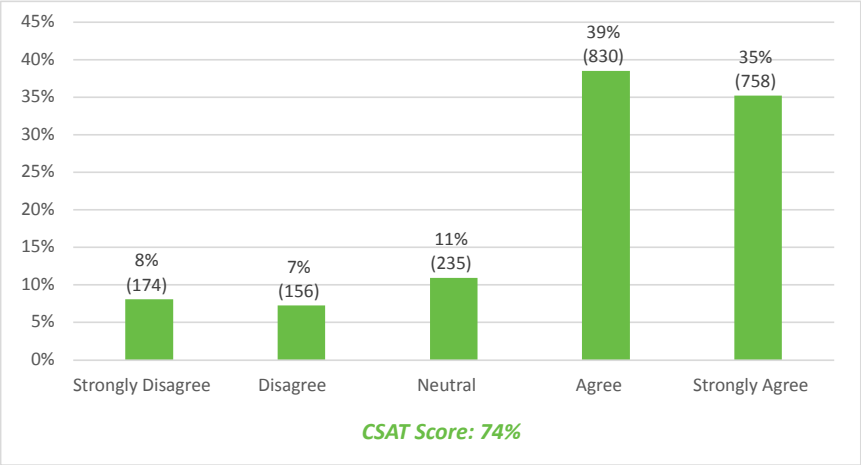

Figure 2A: Overall CSAT Score for Question 2

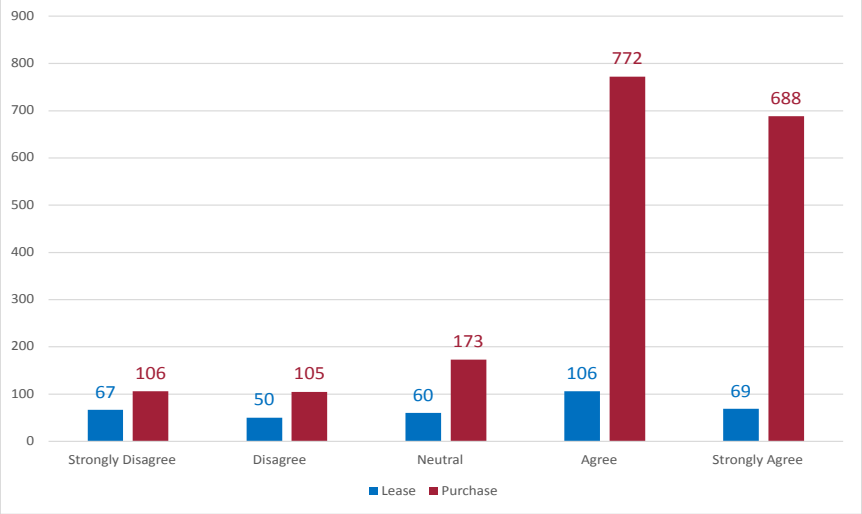

Figure 2B: Lease and Purchase responses for Question 2

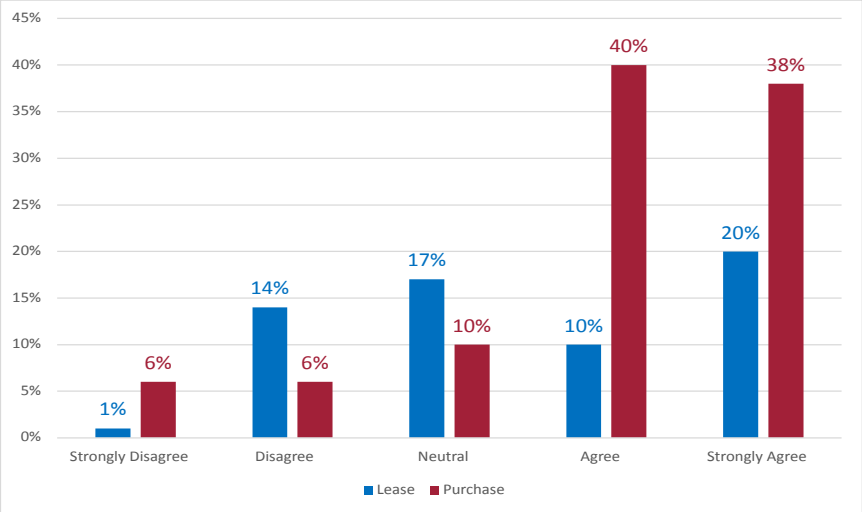

Figure 2C: Percentage of responses for Lease and Purchase customers for Question 2

3. Before I signed my installation contract, I "Shopped around" and compared proposals from multiple solar companies for my project.

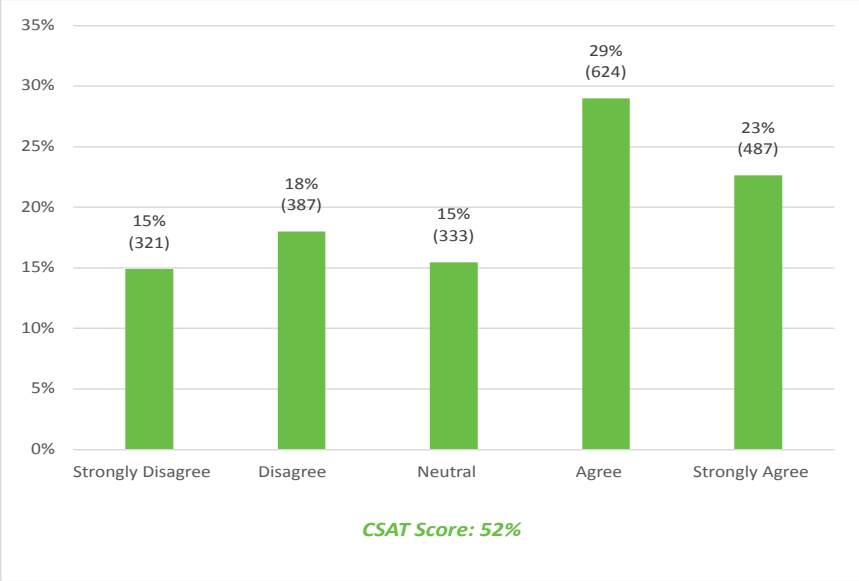

Figure 3A: Overall CSAT Score for Question 3

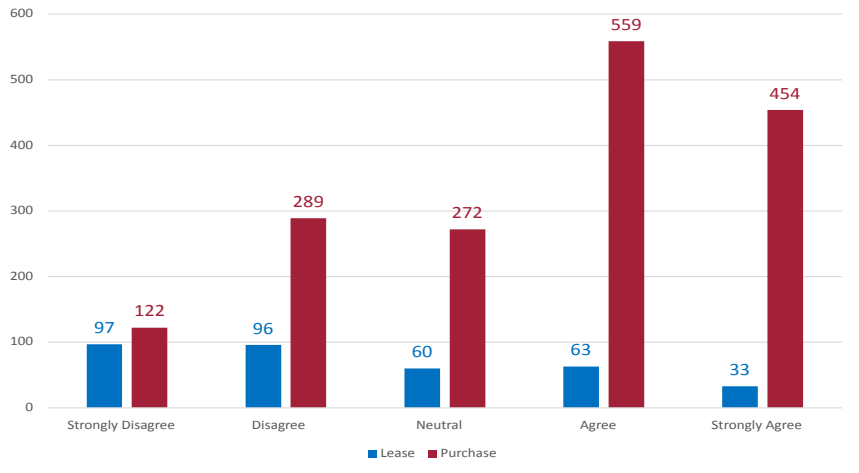

Figure 3B: Lease and Purchase responses for Question 3

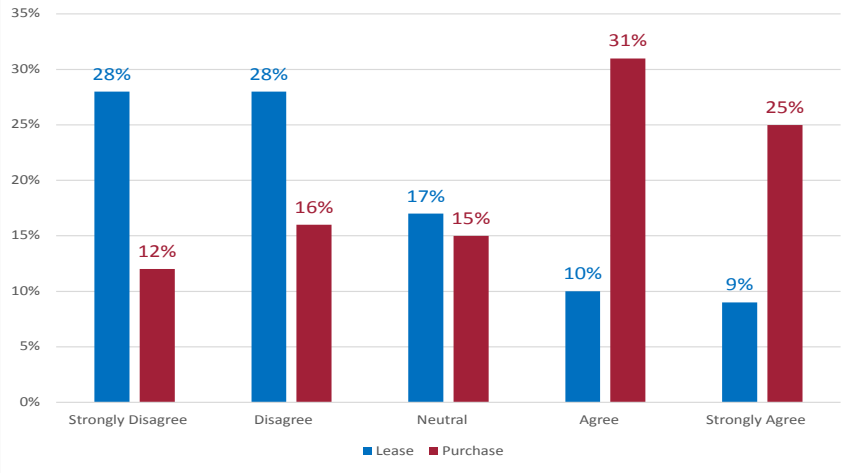

Figure 3C: Percentage of responses for Lease and Purchase customers for Question 3

4. My decision to go forward with my project was driven by the economic benefits from participating in Illinois Shines.

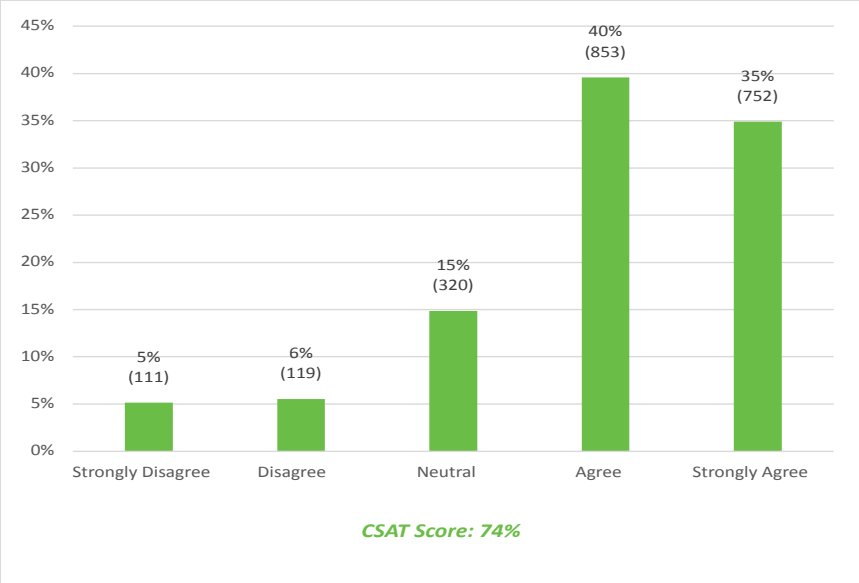

Figure 4A: Overall CSAT Score for Question 4

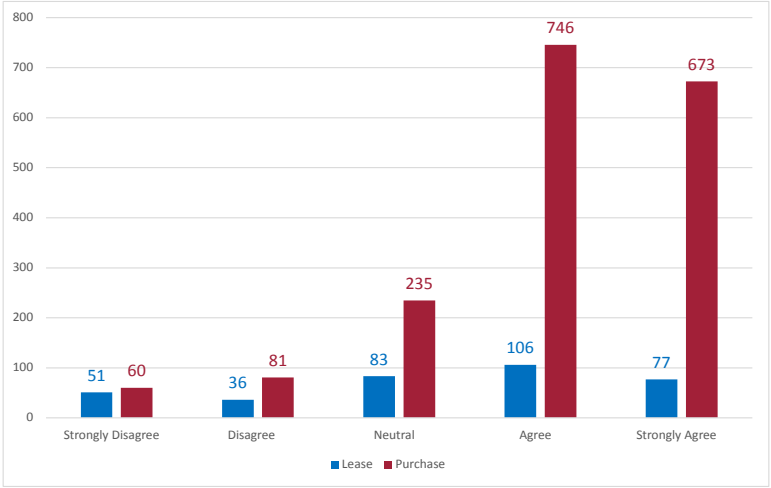

Figure 4B: Lease and Purchase responses for Question 4

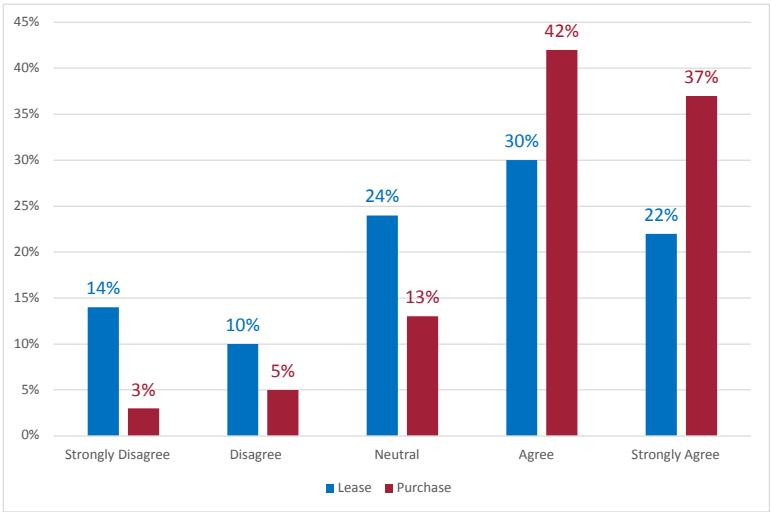

Figure 4C: Percentage of responses for Lease and Purchase customers for Question 4

5. My solar company was responsive to my questions and concerns before I signed the installation contract.

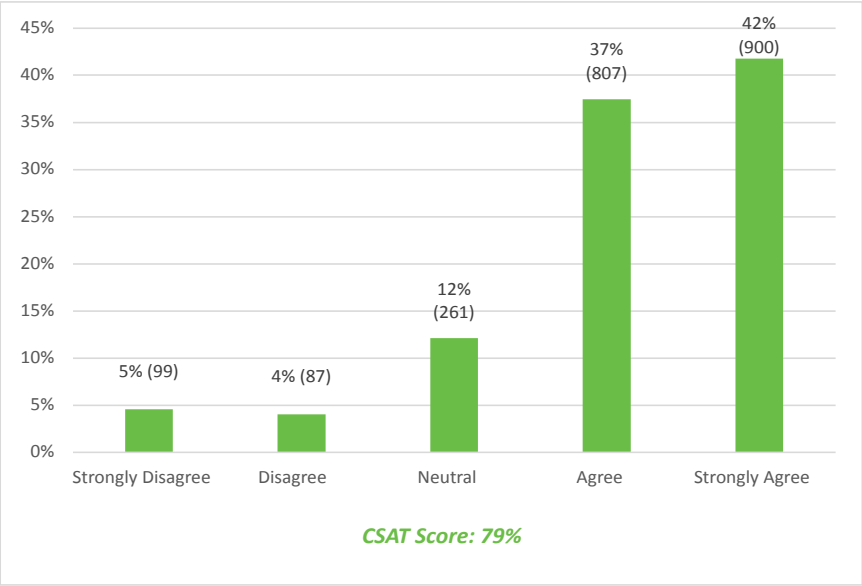

Figure 5A: Overall CSAT Score for Question 5

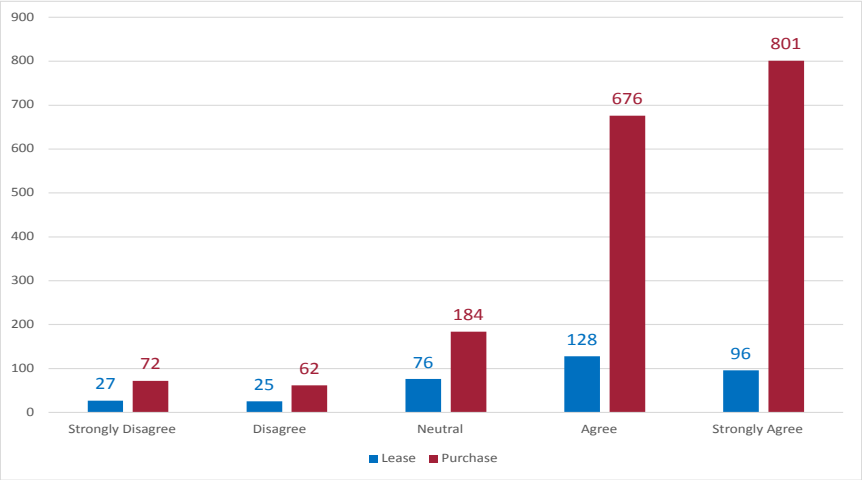

Figure 5B: Lease and Purchase responses for Question 5

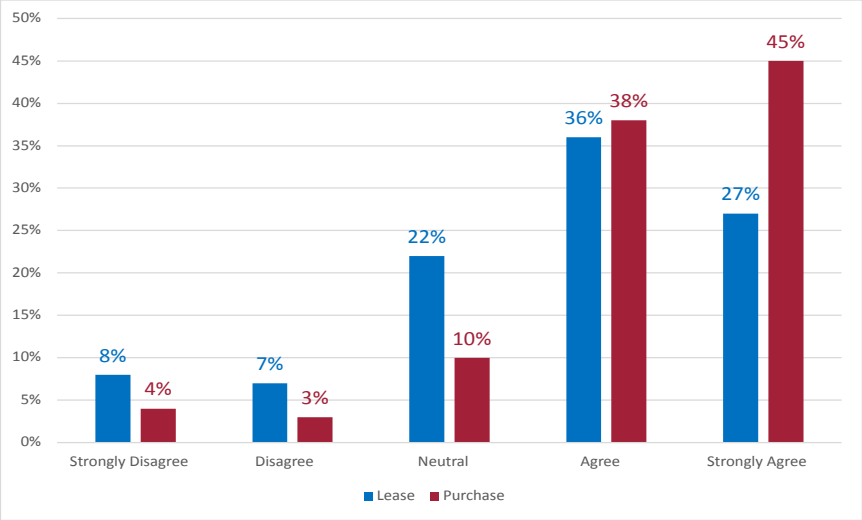

Figure 5C: Percentage of responses for Lease and Purchase customers for Question 5

6. The timeline provided by my solar company for the installation and energization of my system ended up being accurate.

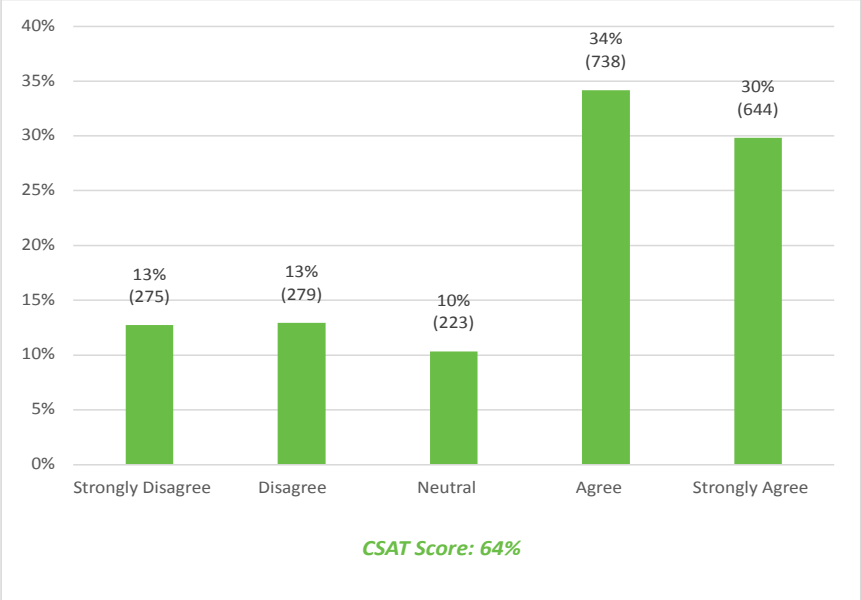

Figure 6A: Overall CSAT Score for Question 6

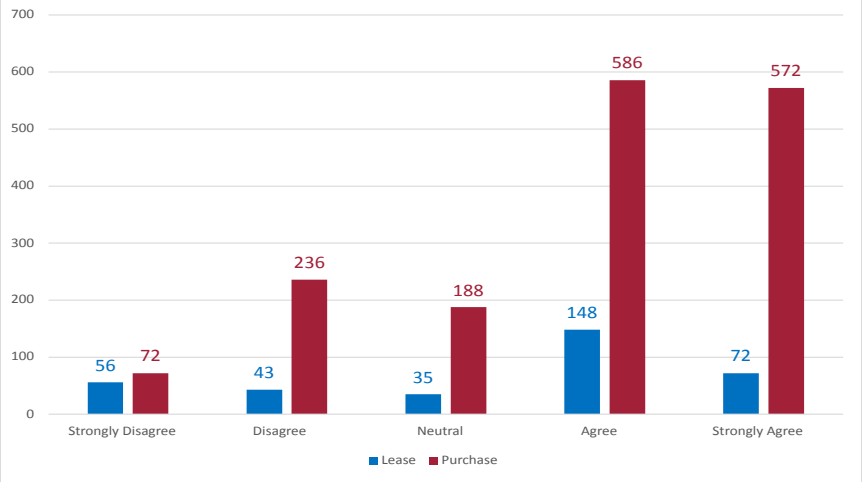

Figure 6B: Lease and Purchase responses for Question 6

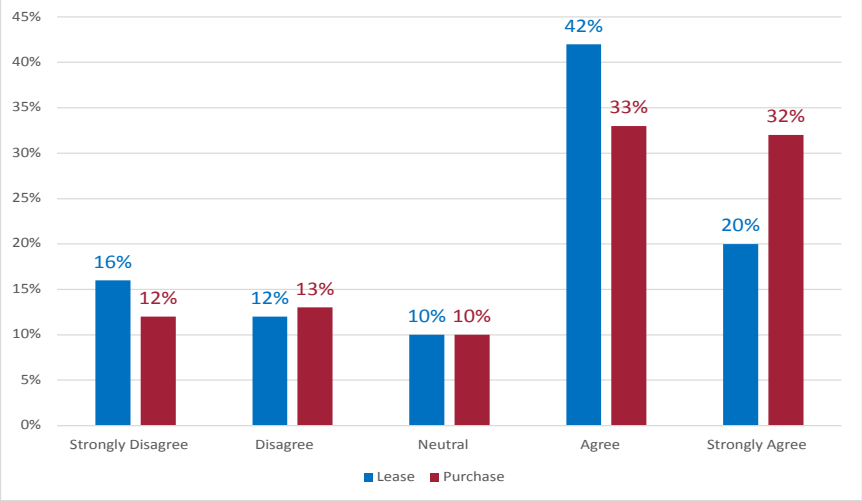

Figure 6C: Percentage of responses for Lease and Purchase customers for Question 6

7. My solar company was responsive to my questions and concerns during and after the installation and energization process.

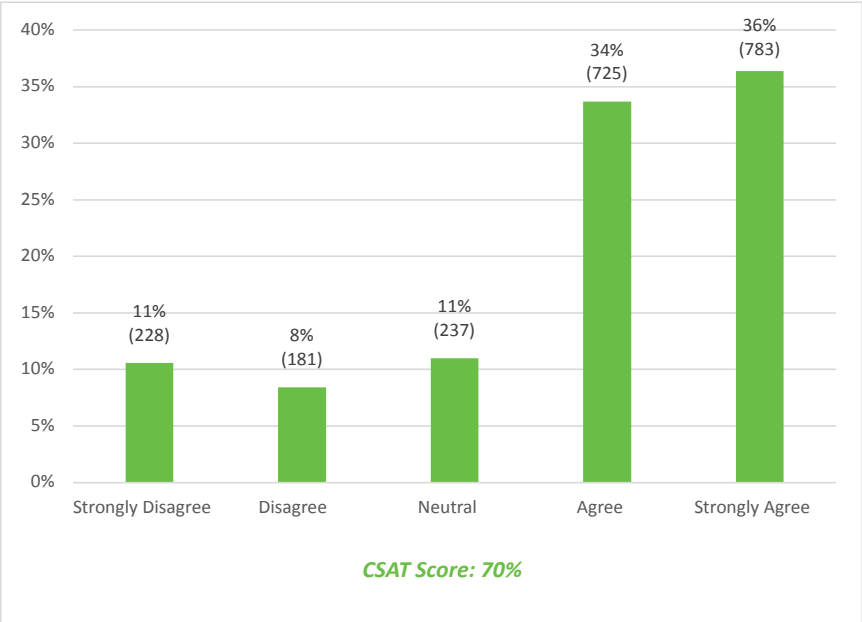

Figure 7A: Overall CSAT Score for Question 7

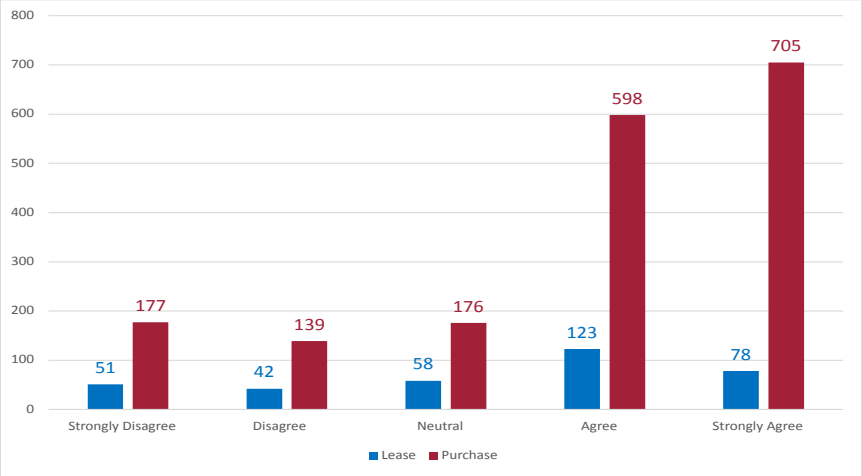

Figure 7B: Lease and Purchase responses for Question 7

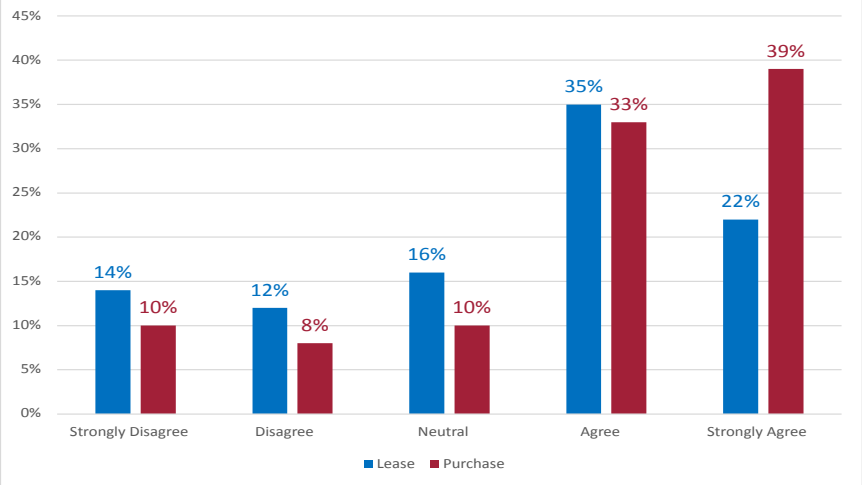

Figure 7C: Percentage of responses for Lease and Purchase customers for Question 7

8. The Illinois Shines Disclosure Form helped me understand Illinois Shines and key information about my solar project before I signed my installation contract.

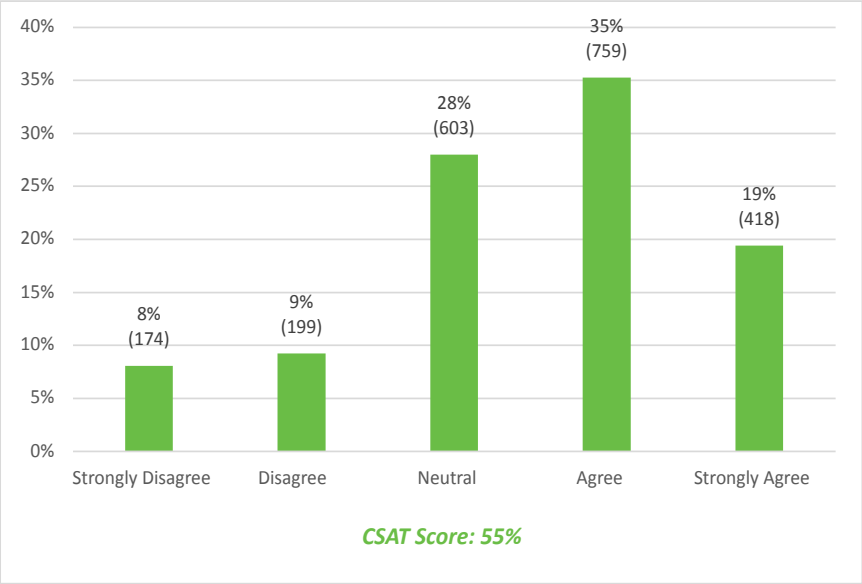

Figure 8A: Overall CSAT Score for Question 8

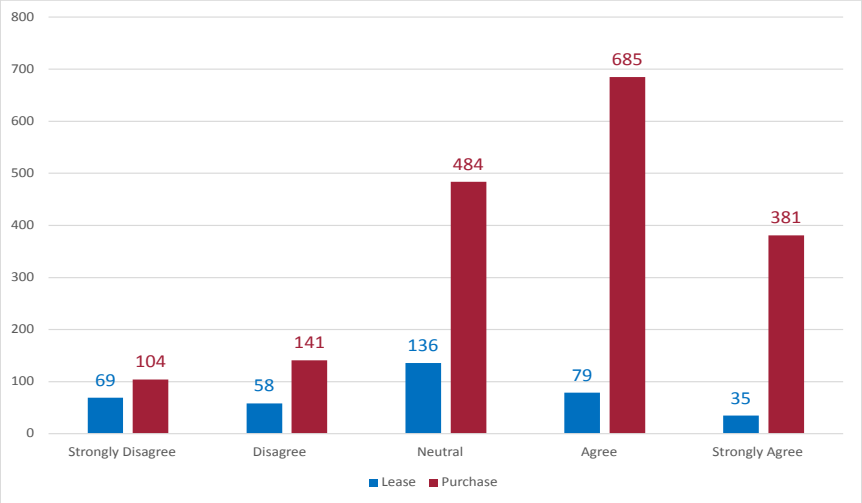

Figure 8B: Lease and Purchase responses for Question 8

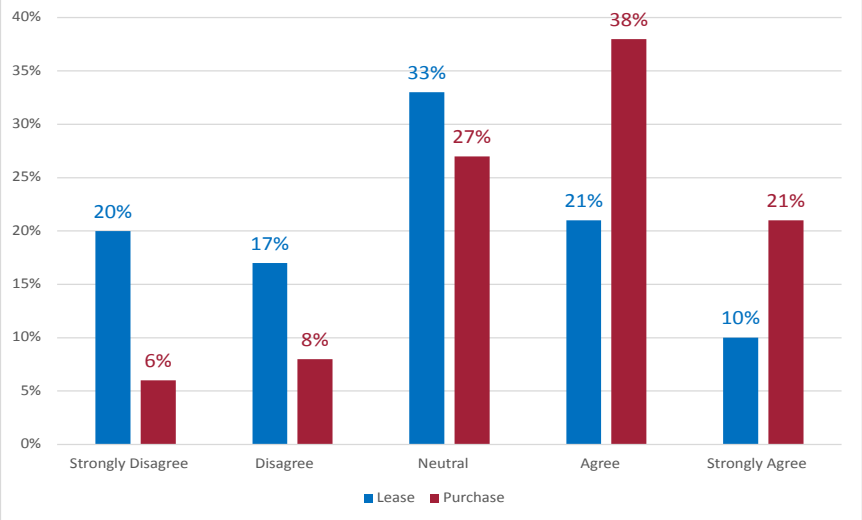

Figure 8C: Percentage of responses for Lease and Purchase customers for Question 8

9. The www.IllinoisShines.com website has been a useful resource to help me understand more about the Illinois Shines program and/or to get information about my project.

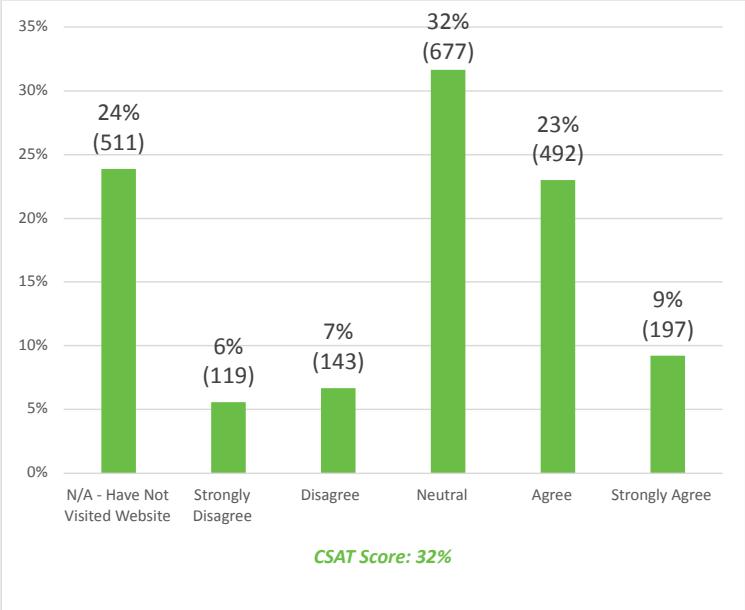

Figure 9A: Overall CSAT Score for Question 9

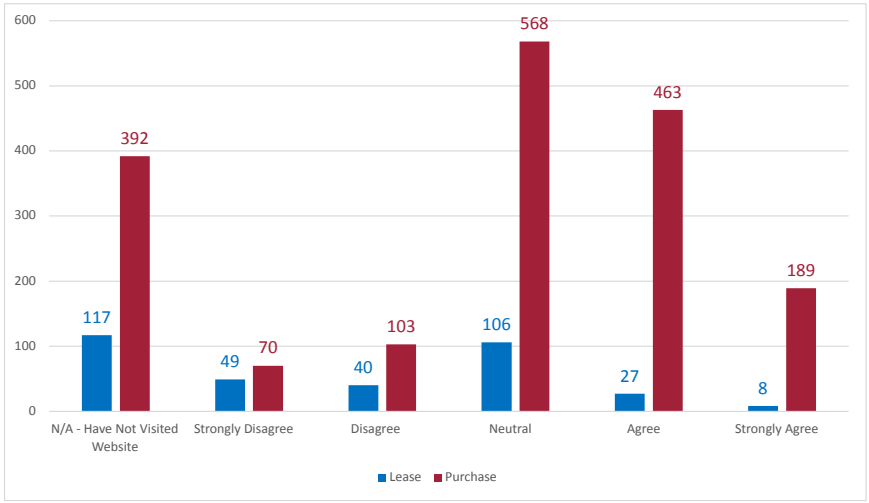

Figure 9B: Lease and Purchase responses for Question 9

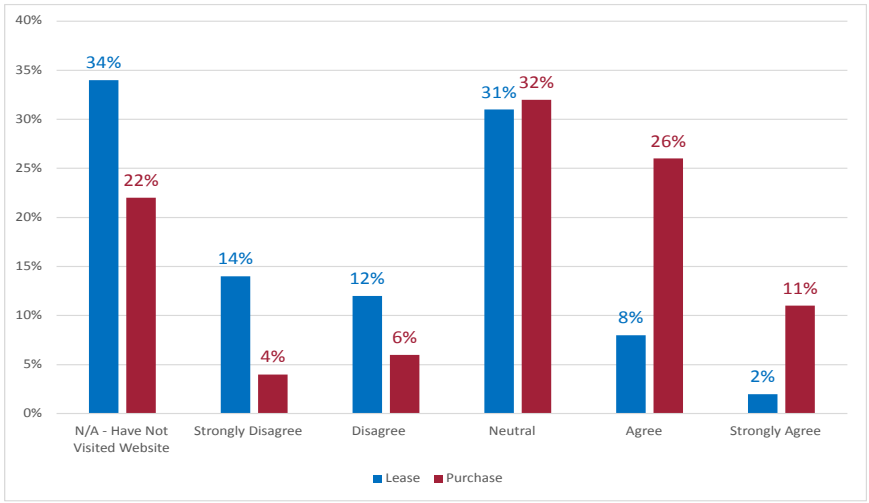

Figure 9C: Percentage of responses for Lease and Purchase customers for Question 9

10. Based on my experiences, I would recommend residential solar and the Illinois Shines program to friends and family.

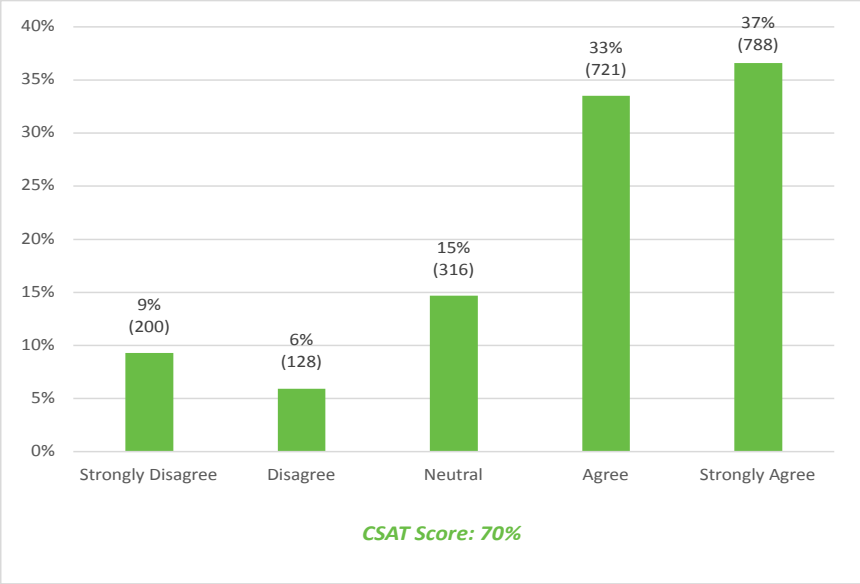

Figure 10A: Overall CSAT Score for Question 10

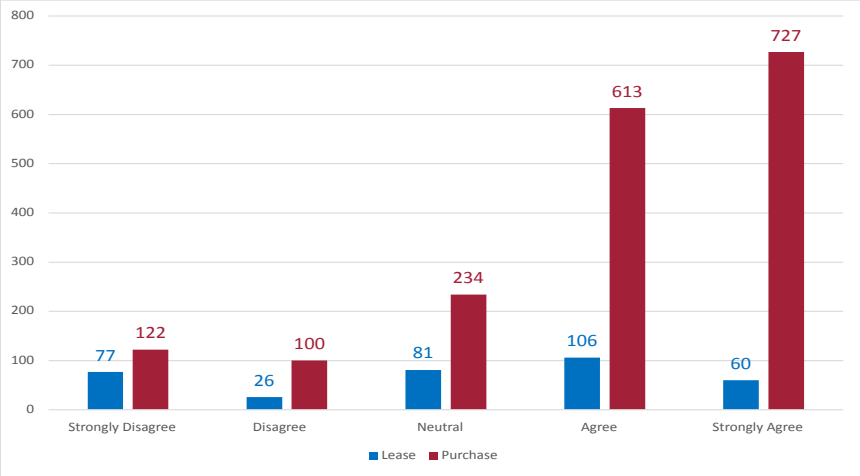

Figure 10B: Lease and Purchase responses for Question 10

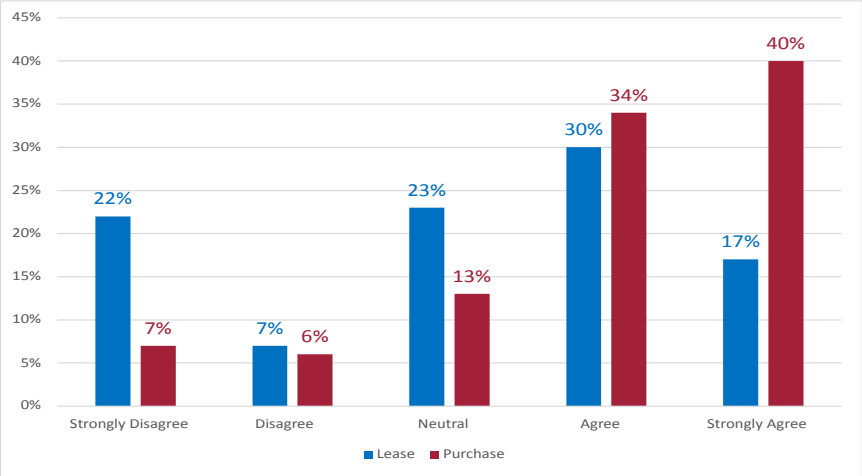

Figure 10C: Percentage of responses for Lease and Purchase customers for Question 10

11. Before I signed my installation contract, my solar company clearly explained that I would not own the solar project.

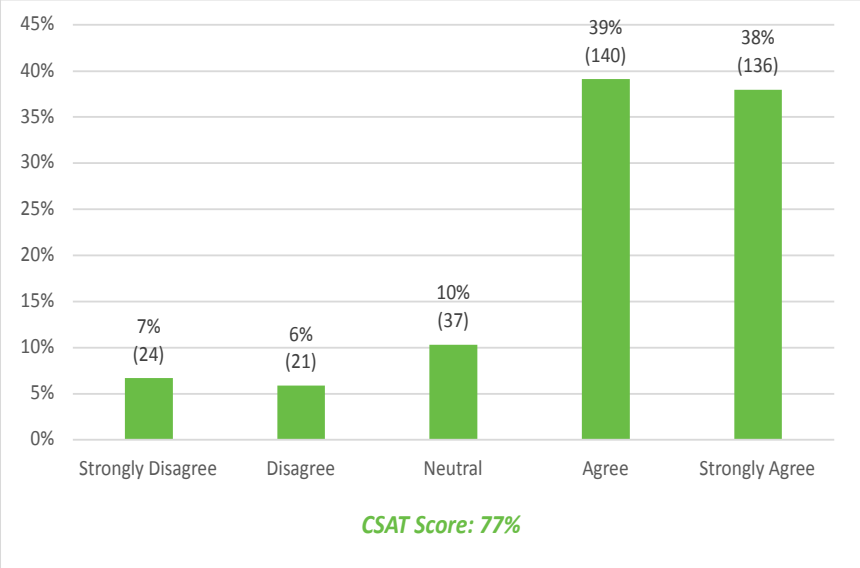

Figure 11A: Overall CSAT Score for Question 11

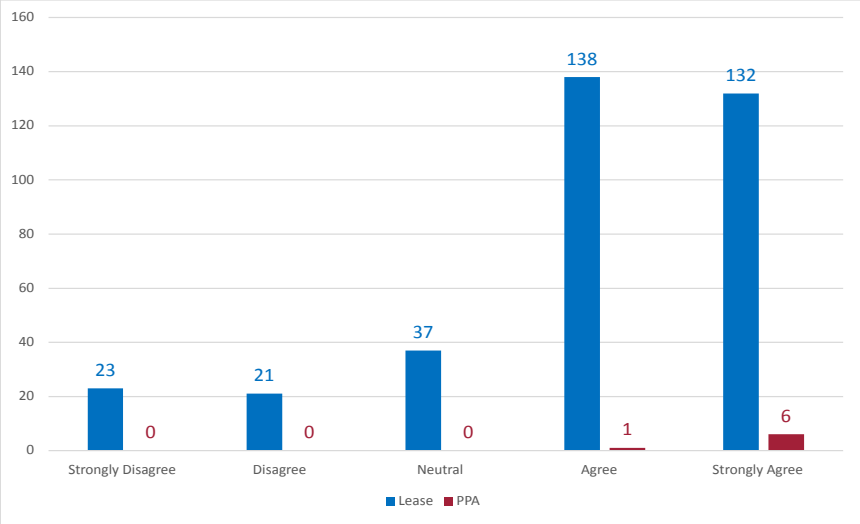

Figure 11B: Lease and PPA responses for Question 11

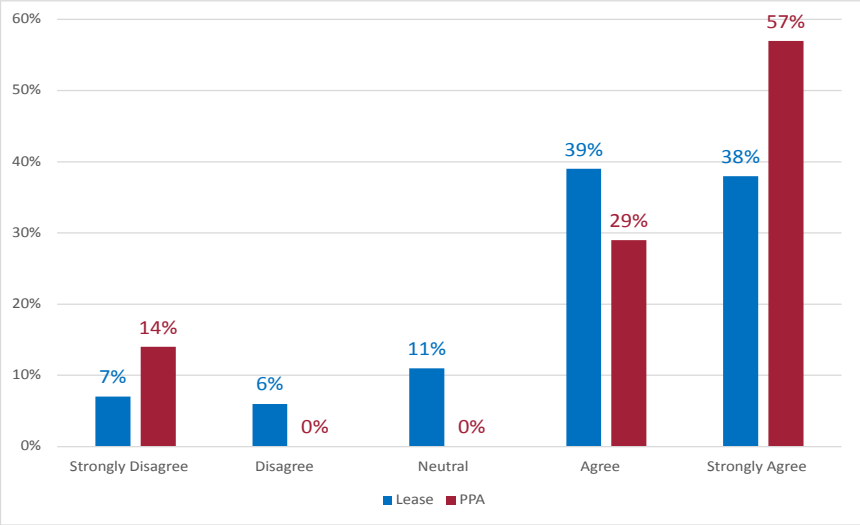

Figure 11C: Percentage of responses for Lease and PPA customers for Question 11

12. Before I signed my installation contract, my solar company clearly explained that, with my Lease or Power Purchase Agreement, I will not be eligible to receive federal tax credits for the solar project, nor would the Illinois Shines incentive be paid to me.

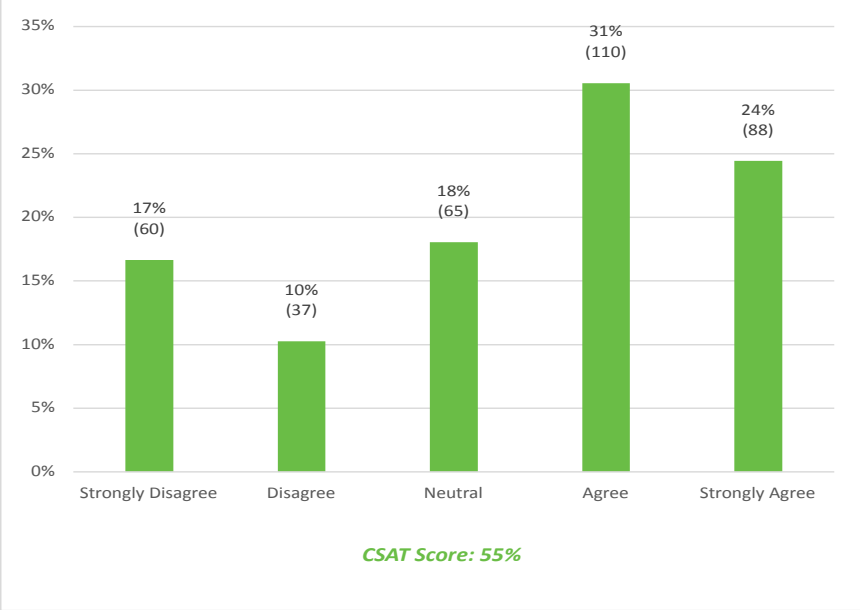

Figure 12A: Overall CSAT Score for Question 12

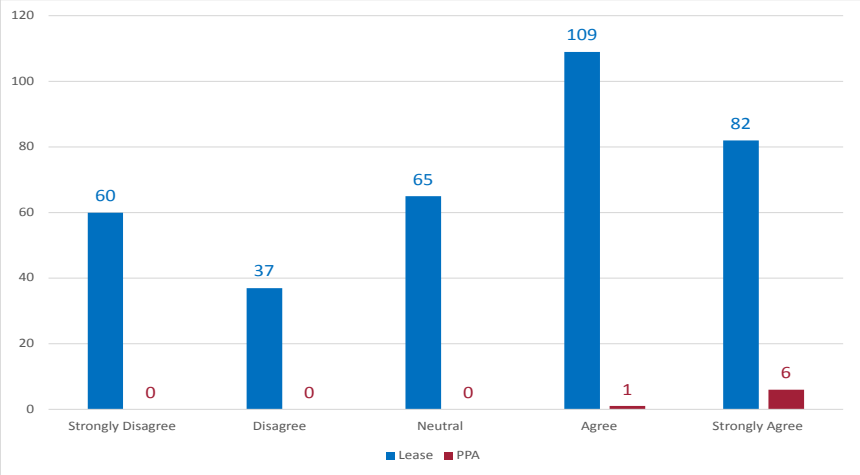

Figure 12B: Lease and PPA responses for Question 12

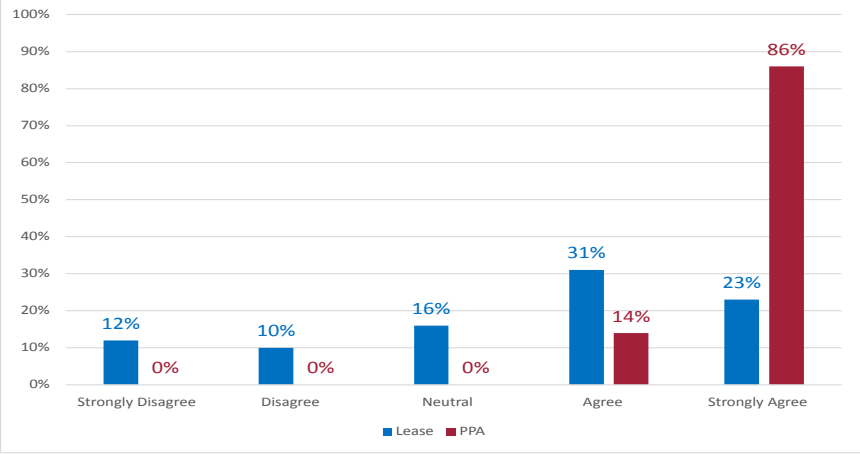

Figure 12C: Percentage of responses for Lease and PPA customers for Question 12

13. Before I signed my installation contract, my solar company clearly explained any savings on utility bill costs I should expect from generation from the solar project.

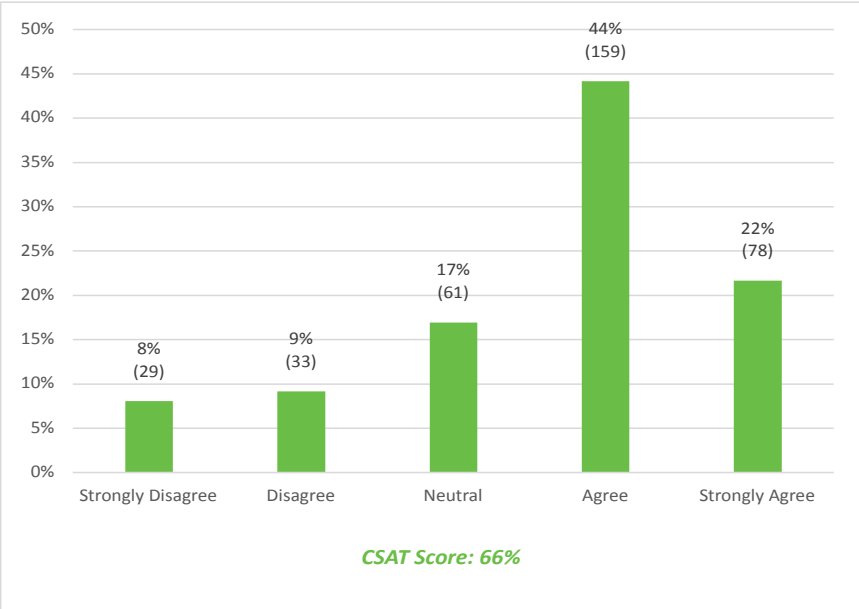

Figure 13A: Overall CSAT Score for Question 13

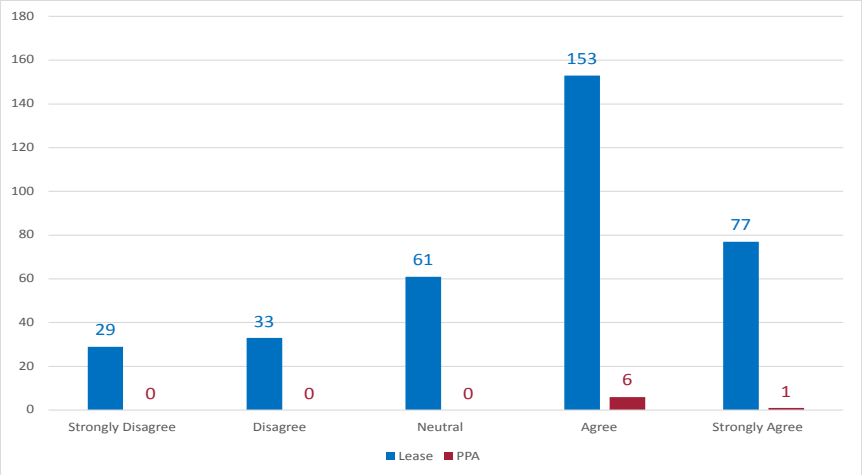

Figure 13B: Lease and PPA responses for Question 13

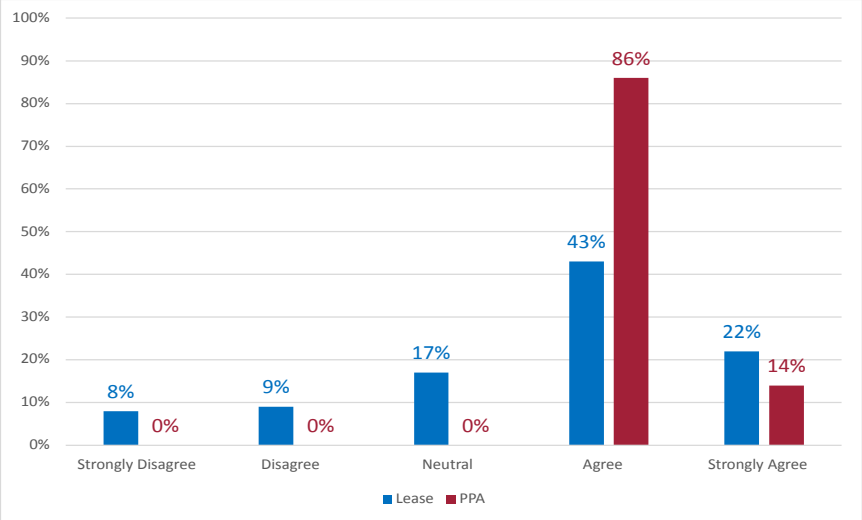

Figure 13C: Percentage of responses for Lease and PPA customers for Question 13

Section Three: Cross Tabulation Heatmaps:

Cross Tabulation compares the results for one or more variables with the results of another. A heatmap utilizes color coding to enhance comprehension of these results. Visualizing the results using cross-tabulation heatmaps allows us to identify relationships between one or more categorical variables. For this survey, the cross-tabulation results examine the relationship between whether a customer's solar company helped develop a clear understanding of the Program and how satisfied a customer was with their experience in the Illinois Shines program. Warmer colors (yellow and orange) indicate a strong relationship between responses and cooler colors (blue and green) indicate a weaker relationship.

	Based on my experiences, I would recommend residential solar and the Illinois Shines program to friends and family.				
Before I signed my installation contract, my solar company helped me understand any economic benefits I would receive from participating in Illinois Shines.	**Strongly Agree (5)**	**Agree (4)**	**Neutral (3)**	**Disagree (2)**	**Strongly Disagree (1)**
Strongly Agree (5)	544	152	36	9	16
Agree (4)	198	434	129	36	28
Neutral (3)	22	75	76	33	27
Disagree (2)	9	37	41	27	41
Strongly Disagree (1)	14	19	33	22	86

Figure 14: Cross tabulation heatmap comparing customer education level to overall experience with the program.

	Based on my experiences, I would recommend residential solar and the Illinois Shines program to friends and family.				
My solar company was responsive to my questions and concerns during and after the installation and energization process.	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
Strongly Agree (5)	543	169	45	9	15
Agree (4)	170	383	116	31	24
Neutral (3)	33	73	68	32	30
Disagree (2)	18	56	45	29	31
Strongly Disagree (1)	23	38	42	27	97

Figure 15: Cross tabulation heatmap comparing AV responsiveness during and after the installation process to overall experience with the program.

	Based on my experiences, I would recommend residential solar and the Illinois Shines program to friends and family.				
The Illinois Shines Disclosure Form helped me understand Illinois Shines and key information about my solar project before I signed an installation contract.	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
Strongly Agree (5)	356	42	9	3	8
Agree (4)	276	377	67	20	17
Neutral (3)	126	247	149	40	39
Disagree (2)	19	36	59	35	49
Strongly Disagree (1)	10	17	31	29	86

Figure 16: Cross tabulation heatmap comparing perception of Disclosure Form and overall experience with the program.

	Based on my experiences, I would recommend residential solar and the Illinois Shines program to friends and family.				
The www.IllinoisShines.com website has been a useful resource to help me understand more about the Illinois Shines program and/or to get information about my project.	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
Strongly Agree (5)	164	24	4	3	2
Agree (4)	216	197	49	13	17
Neutral (3)	204	258	122	44	45
Disagree (2)	8	38	39	31	27
Strongly Disagree (1)	8	12	23	10	66

Figure 16: Cross tabulation heatmap comparing website usage and overall experience with the program.

Section Four: Analysis of Results

As previously described, the survey had five goals: (1) better understand customers' experiences working with Program entities, (2) understand customers' level of understanding of the Program, (3) compare the results of this survey with the baseline set by the pilot survey, (4) provide customers with an avenue to provide written feedback to the Program Administrator; and (5) identify customers willing to discuss their experiences further with the Program Administrator. We believe the survey achieved its goals.
A summary of findings and related takeaways are as follows***:

- The overall CSAT score for the survey was 64%.
    - Survey participants with Purchased systems scored at or above the average CSAT score for each question for an overall CSAT score of 69%. Purchase customers were more likely to shop around before signing an installation agreement (56% CSAT score compared to 28% for Lease customers and 29% for PPA customers) and have their solar company help them develop a clear understanding of their project before signing an installation agreement (71% CSAT score compared to 55% for Lease and 57% for PPA).
    - Lease customers scored at or below the average CSAT score for each question for an overall CSAT score of 51%. It appears there may be more discrepancies in the Lease sales process, as sales representatives may be able to downplay the economic obligations related to the Leases. Several Lease customers noted that their sales representatives only informed them that their utility bill would decrease, but did not explain the monthly fees that come with a Leased system. See the below sections for further analysis of this issue.
- The Program Administrator believes there are multiple potential explanations for this significant difference between Lease and Purchase customer CSAT scores.
    - The Disclosure Form provides clear and consistent information about the details of a project to customers who are considering a solar offer. An Approved Vendor or Designee must have a customer sign the Disclosure Form before the installation agreement is executed. In a review of comments submitted by Lease customers, many Lease customers noted that they had either never heard of Illinois Shines or seen a Disclosure Form .
        - This may be due to Lease sales representatives omitting relevant information for consumers to decide on a financing structure or the nature of the Program.
        - Additionally, Lease customers do not directly receive a pass-through incentive payment through their participation in Illinois Shines, which may lead to sales representatives not thoroughly explaining the Disclosure Form. Fifty-eight (58) Lease customers noted that they either did not know what a Disclosure Form was, did not receive a Disclosure Form, had never heard of Illinois Shines, or did not remember reading a Disclosure Form. For example, in response to question four of the survey, "My decision to go forward with my project was driven by the economic benefits from participating in Illinois Shines," a Lease customer was six times more likely than a Purchase customer to explicitly mention having never heard of Illinois Shines in the comment section of question four.

*** PPA customers had an overall CSAT score of 64% and scored higher for some questions and lower for others compared to the average CSAT score. This section of the report primarily focuses on analyzing Purchase and Lease responses, as PPA responses may not be reflective of the average PPA customer's experience given the low number of responses

- Lease customers were more likely to indicate that they have not visited the Illinois Shines website (34%) compared to Purchase customers (22%), which indicates Lease customers are also less likely to access additional educational materials developed by the Program Administrator. This supports the Program Administrator's impression that information related to the Illinois Shines program is not a key focus in the Lease sales process when compared to the sales process for Purchase customers.

- Overall, a high percentage of customers (70%) would recommend residential solar to friends and family.
  - 75% of Purchase customers would recommend going solar to their friends and family, while only 47% of Lease customers and 43% of PPA customers would make this recommendation. Purchase customers may take more time to fully understand their project, as purchasing a system through a loan or upfront payment may feel like a more significant commitment compared to leasing a system or entering into a PPA.
- The heat maps in Section Three show that customers are more likely to recommend solar to friends and family if their solar company helped them understand the economic benefits of participating in the Illinois Shines program and if their solar company remained responsive during the installation and energization process. This correlation shows that the expectations set by the solar company and the service that customers receive from their solar company are major factors in customers' satisfaction with their project and the Program.

Question	Overall CSAT Score	Purchase	Lease
2. Before I signed my installation contract, my solar company helped me understand any economic benefits I would receive by participating in Illinois Shines.	74%	79%	50%
5. My solar company was responsive to my questions and concerns before I signed the installation contract.	79%	82%	64%
7. My solar company was responsive to my questions and concerns during and after the installation and energization process.	70%	72%	57%

Figure 17: CSAT comparisons of Purchase and Lease customers for questions 2, 5, and 7

- Figure 17 compares the CSAT scores for questions that are directly related to their experience with their solar company.
    - Purchase customers reported higher levels of satisfaction with their solar companies' education and responsiveness than Lease customers. On question five, Lease customers were more than twice as likely to report that their sales representative was either not knowledgeable or provided false information compared to Purchase customers. This may be due to Lease sales representatives advertising a "free solar installation," or other similar language, leading to the consumer misunderstanding the nature of the agreements that they are signing up for. Sales representatives may be misrepresenting the contents of the agreements that customers are signing at a higher rate for Leases, as we see higher levels of dissatisfaction across the survey for Lease customers. Leases may have agreement terms that are less straightforward than an outright purchase, which may allow for further misunderstanding or misrepresentation from sales representatives. Lastly, as previously noted, since Lease customers do not receive a pass-through incentive payment, it appears that Lease sale representatives may be more likely to omit information related to the Illinois Shines program from the sales process, which may cause customers to not thoroughly read through the Disclosure Form or access any of the Program's educational resources on the website regarding solar agreements, payments, and financing options.
- A common theme seen in the comments was mention of and concern about deceptive sales practices. Generally, some customers noted that what they were promised during the sales process was not what was delivered. Some Lease customers noted that they were not made aware that they would have to make monthly Lease payments, while some Purchase customers noted they were not made aware that their monthly loan payments would increase if the Illinois Shines incentive and FITC were not put towards the loan within 18 months. In the comment responses for question two, 116 respondents across both financing types noted deceptive sales practices. For example, a Purchase customer noted that, "The explanation of the how the system would impact our electric bill could have been clearer - specifically that we would still be subject to a minimum connection charge each month regardless of how many kWh's the system produced." Another Purchase customer wrote that, "There were hidden fees and deductibles..." Further, a Lease customer wrote that, "My solar company... gave me estimates of kwh electrical production far in excess of what the panels have actually produced. As a result, my combined Ameren electricity bill and... Lease payments are much higher than my electricity bill prior to solar panel installation."

Question	Overall CSAT Score	Purchase	Lease	PPA
1. Before I signed my installation contract, my solar company helped me develop a clear understanding of my project and how the Illinois Shines Program works.	67%	71%	55%	57%
8. The Illinois Shines Disclosure Form helped me understand Illinois Shines and key information about my solar project before I signed my installation contract.	55%	59%	30%	43%

Figure 18: CSAT comparisons of Purchase, Lease, and PPA customers for questions 1 and 8

- The responses listed in Figure 18 show that customers were more likely to agree that their solar company helped them develop a clear understanding of their project rather than the Disclosure Form helping them understand their project. These responses, along with comments left by respondents for these questions, indicate that many customers did not recall reviewing the Disclosure Form or did not spend a lot of time reviewing this document. This may indicate that sales representatives are not giving the proper information about the Disclosure Form or are not allowing customers to have the time to read through the Disclosure Form and ask questions.
- The pilot survey included 193 responses from Purchase customers and had an overall CSAT score of 65%. This survey included responses from 1,800 Purchase customers, and Purchase customers had an overall CSAT score of 68%. The CSAT score for seven out of ten questions between the pilot survey and this survey for Purchase customers were within 5% of each other. Notably, the CSAT score was 9% higher for this survey for question eight ("The Illinois Shines Disclosure Form helped me understand Illinois Shines and key information about my solar project before I signed my installation contract") and 10% higher for question nine (The www.IllinoisShines.com website has been a useful resource to help me understand more about the Illinois Shines program and/or to get information about my project) when compared to the pilot survey.
- Other themes seen throughout the comments include customers with concerns that their solar company has gone out of business and customers concerned that their Lease payments had increased due to Leases being taxed beginning in 2025.

Section Five: Next Steps:

Respondents' comments will help shape how the Program Administrator develops the focus groups. The Program Administrator will host group discussions with customers reporting similar experiences, to attempt to find similarities and differences in their concerns so that the Program Administrator can suggest potential changes to Program documents and Program requirements to the Illinois Power Agency. 766 of the 2,163 participants (35%) voluntarily provided contact information when asked if they would be willing to discuss their experiences with the Program Administrator. Potential focus group topics include:

- Customers who felt that the Disclosure Form was misleading or unclear.
- Customers who found the Illinois Shines website to be confusing or not user friendly.
- Customers who are not seeing the savings they were told to expect.
- Customers who indicated they did not hear about the Illinois Shines program during the sales process.
- Customers who indicated that their solar company was less responsive to them after the installation agreement had been signed

To prepare for additional customer satisfaction surveys moving forward, for each subsequent release, the Program Administrator will review the survey, update it as needed, re-issue, and compare response data with the baselines established in this survey and the pilot survey. One approach is to also include helpful reference information for respondents that may assist them in responding to specific questions. For example, 80 of the 269 respondents who left comments to question eight of this survey noted that they do not remember receiving a Disclosure Form. Due to this trend, the Program Administrator plans to provide a link to an example Disclosure Form in future versions of the customer satisfaction survey, as this may jog some customers' memories about the form and allow them to provide more insightful comments on the impact the Disclosure Form had on their process of going solar.

Appendix:

- Purchase Customer Responses
- Lease Customer Responses
- PPA Customer Responses

Question	Overall CSAT Score	Purchase	Lease	PPA
1. Before I signed my installation contract, my solar company helped me develop a clear understanding of my project and how the Illinois Shines Program works.	67%	71%	55%	57%
2. Before I signed my installation contract, my solar company helped me understand any economic benefits I would receive by participating in Illinois Shines.	74%	79%	50%	43%
3. Before I signed my installation contract, I "Shopped around" and compared proposals from multiple solar companies for my project.	52%	56%	28%	29%
4. My decision to go forward with my project was driven by the economic benefits from participating in Illinois Shines.	74%	79%	52%	43%
5. My solar company was responsive to my questions and concerns before I signed the installation contract.	79%	82%	64%	86%
6. The timeline provided by my solar company for the installation and energization of my system ended up being accurate.	64%	64%	62%	71%
7. My solar company was responsive to my questions and concerns during and after the installation and energization process.	70%	82%	64%	86%
8. The Illinois Shines Disclosure Form helped me understand Illinois Shines and key information about my solar project before I signed my installation contract.	55%	59%	30%	43%
9. The www.IllinoisShines.com website has been a useful resource to help me understand more about the Illinois Shines program and/or to get information about my project.	32%	47%	15%	40%
10. Based on my experiences, I would recommend residential solar and the Illinois Shines program to friends and family.	70%	75%	47%	43%

11. Before I signed my installation contract, my solar company clearly explained that I would not own the solar project.	77%	NA	77%	86%
12. Before I signed my installation contract, my solar company clearly explained that, with my Lease or Power Purchase Agreement, I will not be eligible to receive federal tax credits for the solar project, nor would the Illinois Shines incentive be paid to me.	55%	NA	54%	100%
13. Before I signed my installation contract, my solar company clearly explained any savings on utility bill costs I should expect from generation from the solar project.	66%	NA	65%	100%
Overall Average CSAT Score	64%	68%	51%	64%

Figure 19: CSAT score comparison for each question