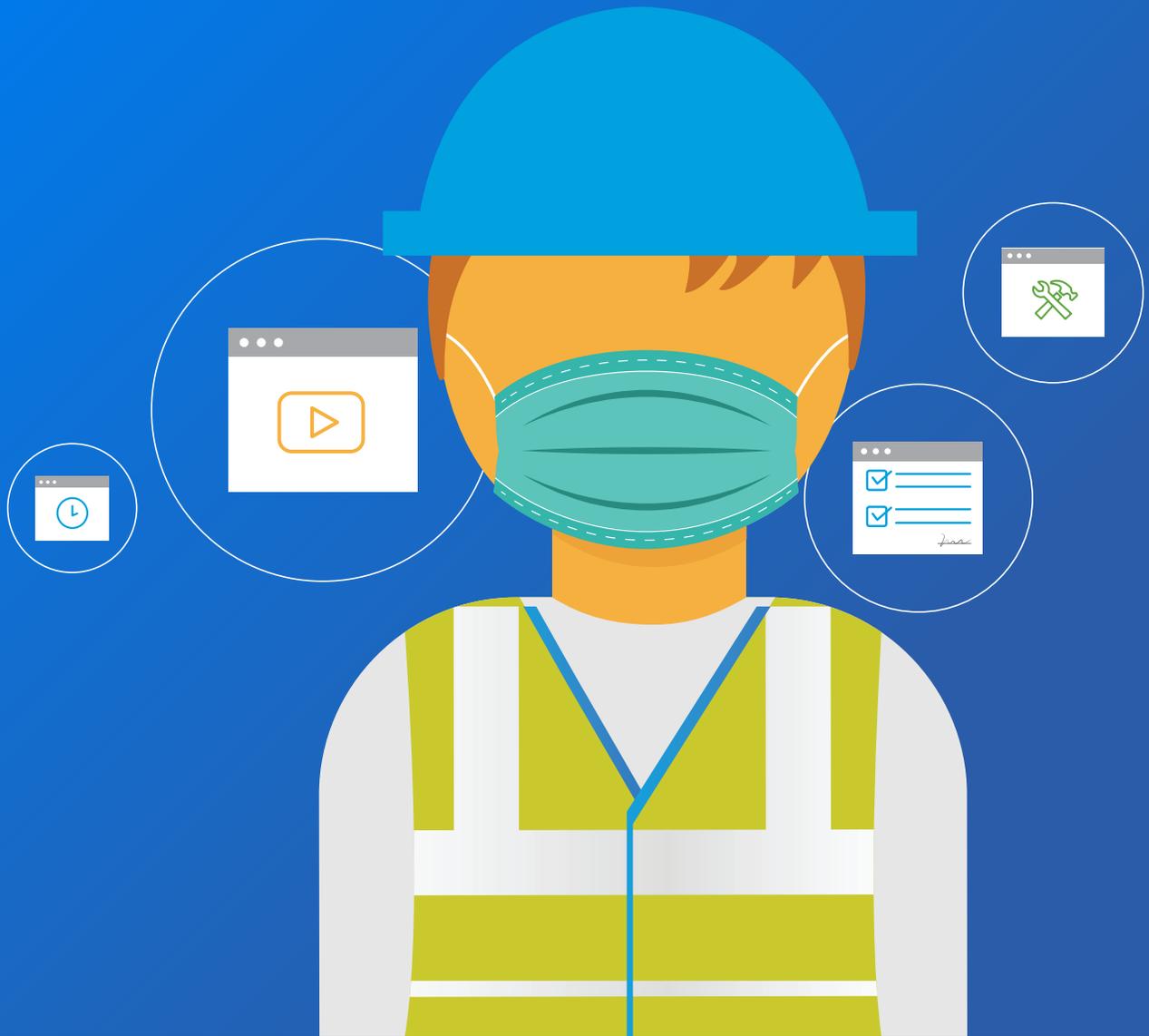


ENERGYSAGE'S
Solar Installer Survey
2020 RESULTS



Published: March 2021



Executive summary

Thoughts from the Ceo & Founder

Hello, and thank you for reading EnergySage's 2020 Solar Installer Survey. This year's survey was fielded and authored in partnership with the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP) and covers the full year of 2020.



Vikram Aggarwal

CEO & Founder

EnergySage

As the country's leading online comparison-shopping marketplace for rooftop solar, energy storage, solar financing, **and now community solar**, EnergySage works closely with our network of over 500 pre-screened solar installation companies throughout the country. Our unique relationship with these solar installation companies – as well as lenders, manufacturers, and distributors – affords us unparalleled insight into the trends shaping the U.S. solar industry.

For the fourth year in a row, we fielded the Solar Installer Survey with NABCEP, the most respected, well-established and widely recognized national certification organization for professionals in the field of renewable energy, expanding the reach of the Survey to as many solar installers as possible.

The 2020 Solar Installer Survey features the responses from over 650 different solar companies of all sizes across 47 states, Washington DC and Puerto Rico. Major insights from the 2020 Solar Installer Survey include:

- **Despite the pandemic, installers reported an all-time high in industry confidence**

Even though more than half of survey respondents indicated that their businesses were negatively impacted as a result of the pandemic, three-fifths of installers are more confident in the solar industry than they were in 2019.

- **The shift to fully remote sales is permanent for some, but temporary for most**

Nearly half of this year's respondents say that customer acquisition remains a primary barrier to growing their business. At the same time, customer acquisition is not getting easier or less expensive: only one-third of installers say finding customers became easier in 2019, while only one ninth say the cost of customer acquisition decreased.

- **One in five solar installations nationwide included a battery**

2020 was the best year ever for residential energy storage installations in the US, a trend that solar installers confirm. According to survey respondents, both consumer interest and the storage attachment rate jumped by over 30% between 2019 and 2020, resulting in a nationwide average attachment rate of 20%.

We hope you enjoy reading this report, and let us know what you think. We welcome all feedback and new collaboration ideas—both large and small. Please reach out to our team directly at data@energysage.com to get the conversation started. We look forward to hearing from you.

Vikram Aggarwal

Vikram Aggarwal | CEO & Founder

Thank you!

EnergySage and NABCEP would like to thank the following organizations for their support in fielding the 2020 *Solar Installer Survey*. Reports like this would not be possible without your help.



WHO ARE THIS YEAR'S RESPONDENTS?

Methodology and overview

EnergySage fielded the *2020 Solar Installer Survey* in collaboration with NABCEP during January 2021. In addition to reaching EnergySage's nationwide network of over 500 solar installation companies and NABCEP's network of over 25,000 solar industry professionals, a number of large manufacturers, distributors, financiers, industry associations and publications also fielded the *Installer Survey* to their networks. Overall, 651 solar installers responded to this survey from 47 states, Washington DC and Puerto Rico.* 70% respondents to this year's survey were either the CEO, Founder or a high-level executive at their respective company.

44% of survey respondents have over 10 years experience installing solar panel systems, while about half have less than three years experience installing storage.

Yearly installation volume

The majority of respondents offer both residential and commercial-scale solar installations: about 3 in 10 respondents are residential-only solar installers, and only 1 in 10 exclusively install larger, commercial and industrial (C&I) systems.

As in years past, the reported installation volume for the residential solar companies who responded to the survey speaks to the number of smaller, local solar companies operating throughout the country: 72% of this year's respondents reported residential installation volume of less than 1 megawatt (MW), compared to 70% in our *2019 Installer Survey*.



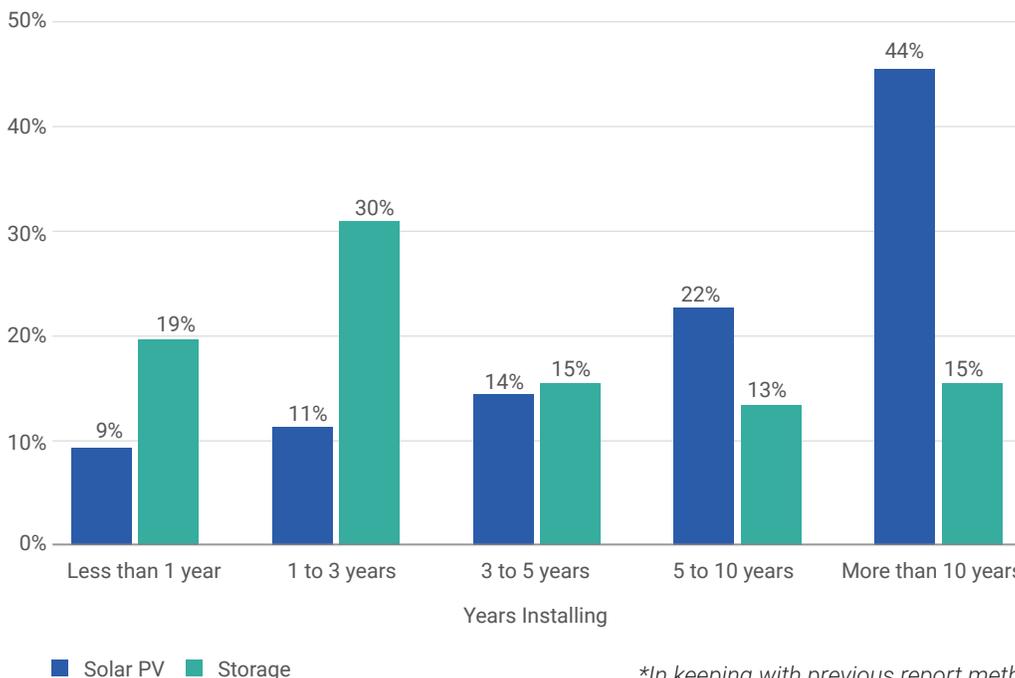
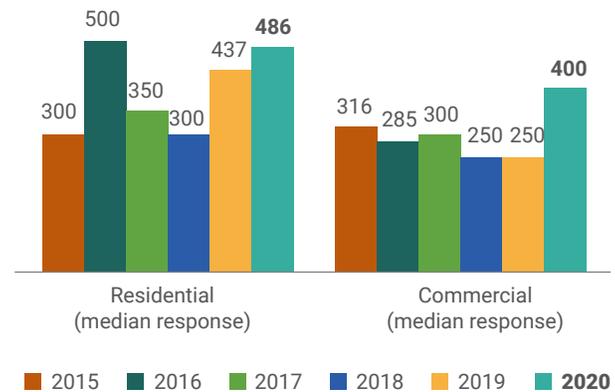
Residential only installers

28%



C&I only installers

8%



Solar vs. storage experience

For the first time, we asked respondents how long they've been installing both solar and storage. Two-thirds of respondents have five years or more experience installing solar. Meanwhile, the storage installation industry remains nascent: half of respondents have less than three years of experience installing solar.

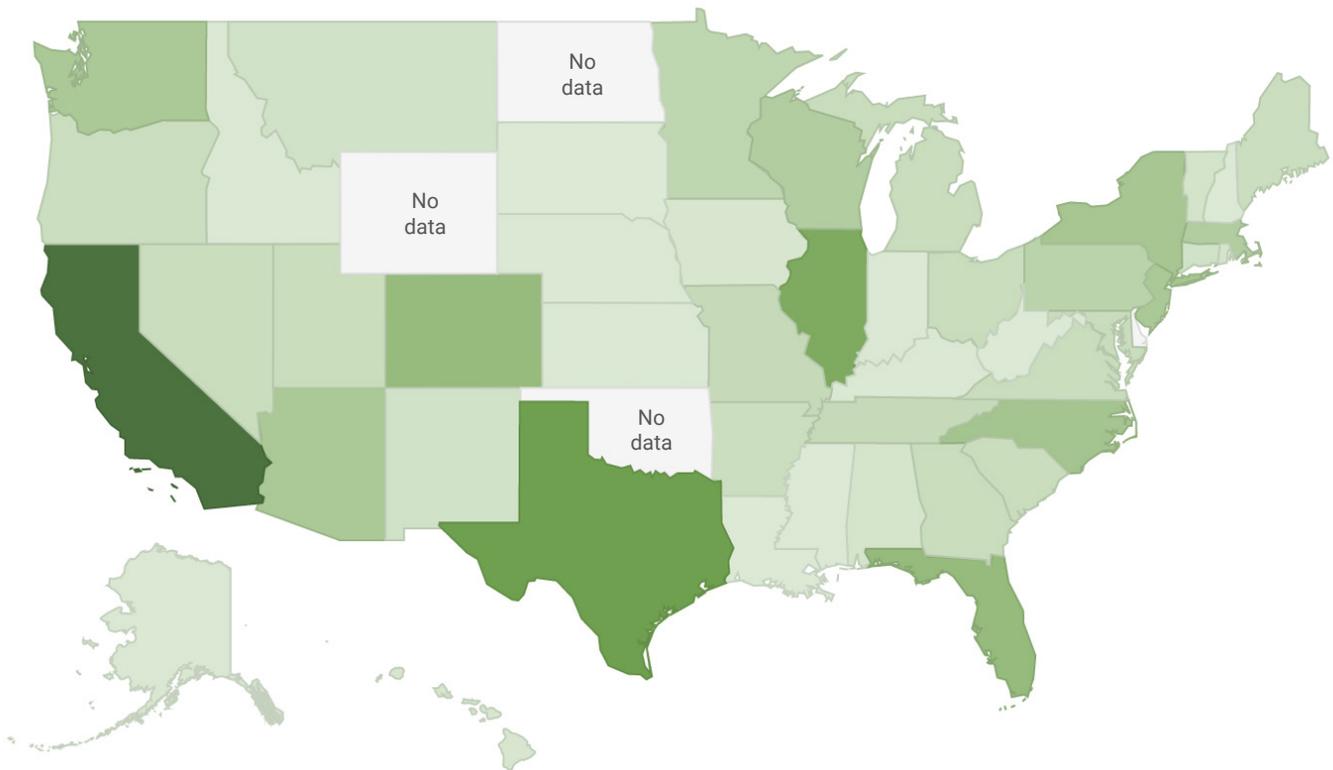
**In keeping with previous report methodologies, EnergySage removed duplicate responses from the same company, as well as responses from junior-level individual contributors, resulting in a pool of 590 responses to analyze*

WHO ARE THIS YEAR'S RESPONDENTS?

Where solar companies operate

The 2020 Installer Survey asked solar companies in which state they complete the most solar installations. Respondents to the survey represent 47 states, Washington DC and Puerto Rico. The solar industry continues to support many different companies—and many jobs—all throughout the country. In fact, this year, only 45 percent of respondents primarily operate in one of the top ten solar states in 2020, while other solar markets—such as Arizona, Colorado and Illinois—were very well-represented in responses.

The solar industry supports many companies throughout the country, with less than half of survey responses coming from 2020's top 10 solar states.



Distribution of Responses



WHO ARE THIS YEAR'S RESPONDENTS?

Installation history and future plans

Many solar installations include more than just solar, meaning installers now need to be proficient at working with new technologies. In fact, for the second year in a row, the percentage of solar installers offering solar-adjacent energy products increased across the board.

Installers are ready to ride the solar-plus wave, with a significant portion already offering many solar-adjacent energy products.



Percentage of installs including a roof upgrade

14%



Percentage of installs including an EV charger

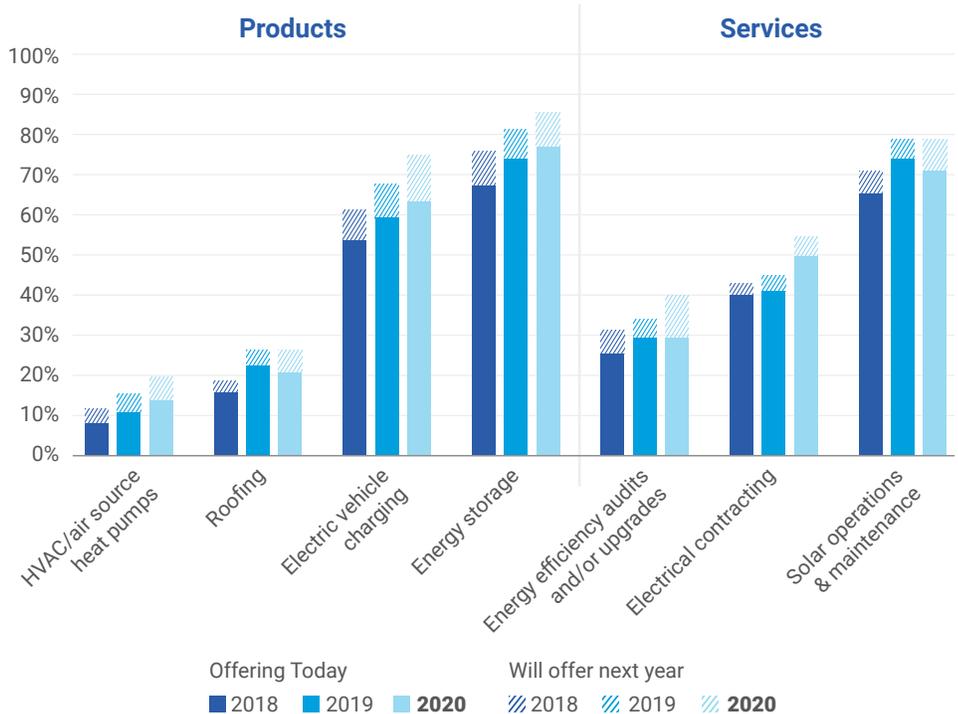
8%

Other products & services offered

Installers could select all that applied

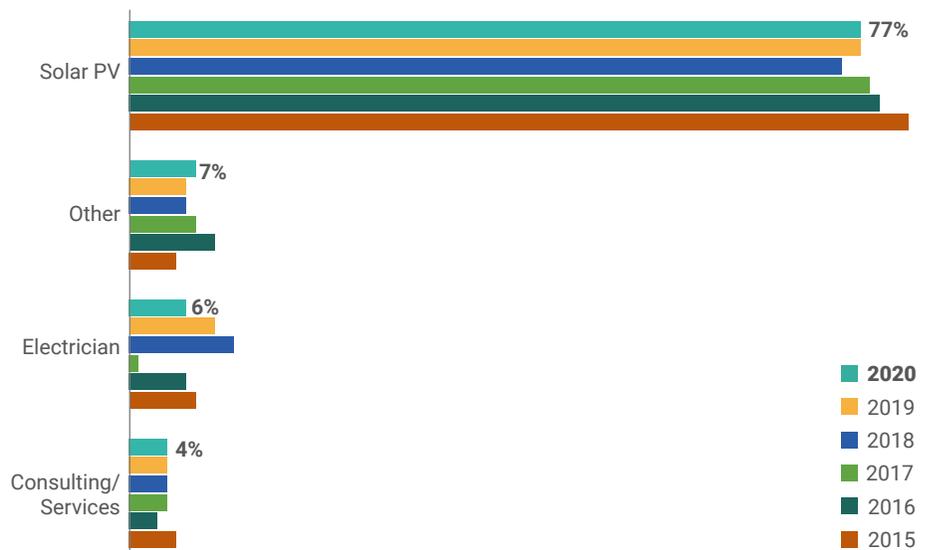
The percentage of solar installers offering more energy products than just solar continues to rise: in 2020, four out of five installers offered energy storage, while three out of four offered solar operations and maintenance (O&M) services.

Interestingly, although a higher fraction of installers offer electric vehicle (EV) chargers than roofing, a higher percentage of solar installs include a new roof (14%) than an EV charger (8%).



Primary business

Despite the uptick in adoption of solar adjacent products, survey respondents overwhelmingly point to solar installations as their primary business. Three-quarters of respondents are solar installers first and foremost, more than in any previous iteration of the *Installer Survey*.



COVID IMPACT

How did the pandemic impact installers?

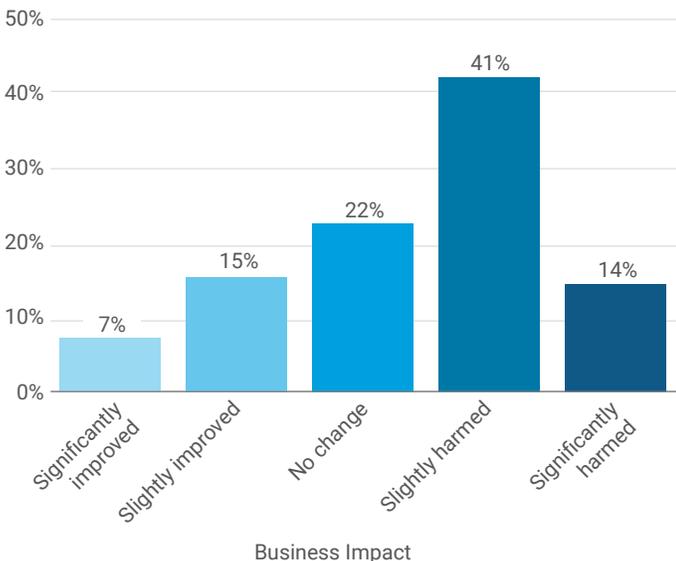
The majority of solar installers have already returned to selling solar in person, while only 12% of installers plan to continue to sell solar remotely indefinitely.

As was the case for every person and every sector, the story of 2020 for the solar industry was dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Solar installation numbers paint a picture of an industry that first experienced a significant dip in the spring, before an expectation-defying resurgence in the second half of the year. But to get the full picture of how COVID-19 impacted the industry, we asked installers how the pandemic affected their perception of the industry, how it impacted their business and how the pandemic has changed their solar sales practices.

Installers experience adverse business impact

More than half of respondents report that the pandemic has negatively impacted their business, while less than a quarter say they experienced no change to business due to the pandemic. However, installers paint a generally positive picture of 2020: as seen on the next page, only 18% of installers say the pandemic decreased their confidence in the industry.

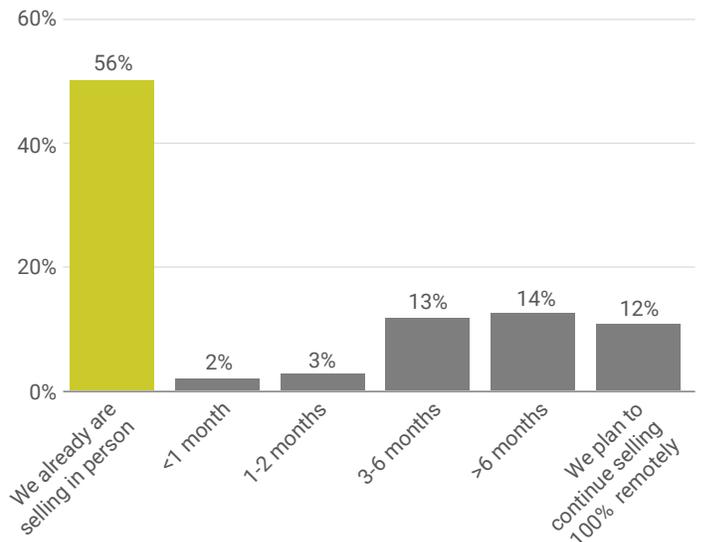
COVID business impact



A return to business as usual?

We asked installers when they planned to return to selling in person. Respondents were relatively split on those that are already selling in person—or plan to soon—versus those who don't expect to sell in person for many months to come—if at all. Interestingly, only 12% of solar installers plan to continue selling 100% remotely moving forward.

When will you return to selling in person?



INSTALLER CONFIDENCE

Installer confidence index

Despite the impact of COVID-19 on solar businesses, installers expressed more confidence in the industry than in any previous *Installer Survey*.

Installer confidence in the solar industry continues to increase. While results from individual solar markets may vary, at a national level, respondents to the *Installer Survey* are more confident in the solar industry than in years past.

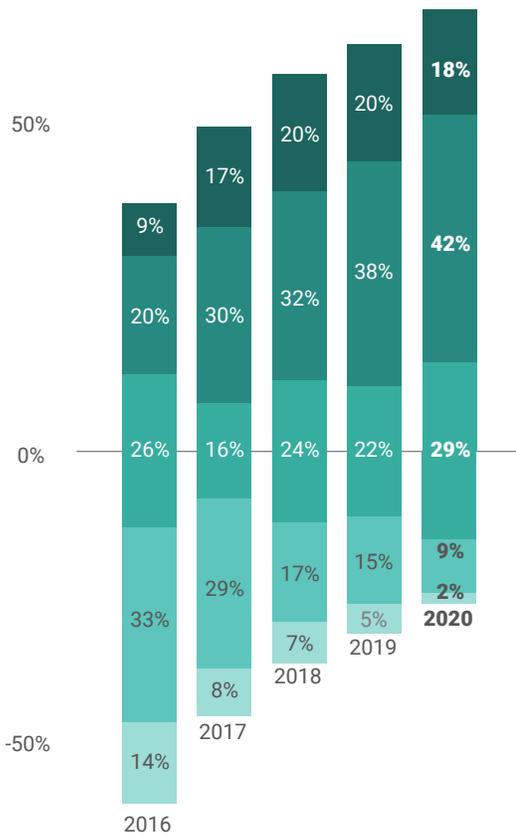
Separately from asking installers how COVID-19 impacted their confidence in the solar industry, we asked them overall how their confidence had changed in 2020. For the fourth year in a row, installers are more confident than ever in the solar industry, with 60% more confident in the industry in 2020 than they were in 2019, and with only 2% significantly less confident in the industry.

Notably, we fielded the 2020 *Installer Survey* during January 2021, after two important policy shifts for the solar industry: the extension of the federal investment tax credit (ITC) and the election of an administration friendlier to the clean energy industry. At the same time, the survey was closed by the time of the blackouts in Texas, which may play a role in driving interest in solar for resiliency in Texas and beyond.

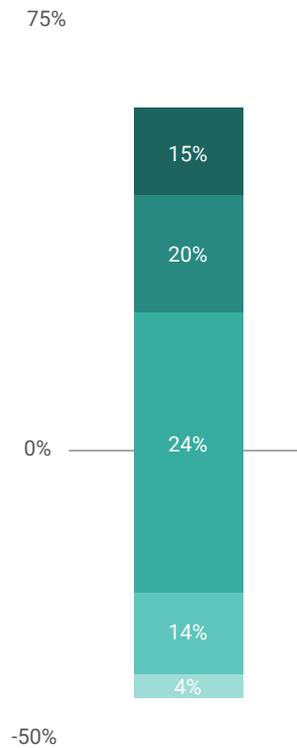
Installer Confidence by Top Markets

■ Much less confident
 ■ Slightly less confident
 ■ Confidence has remained the same
 ■ Slightly more confident
 ■ Much more confident
— Neutral line

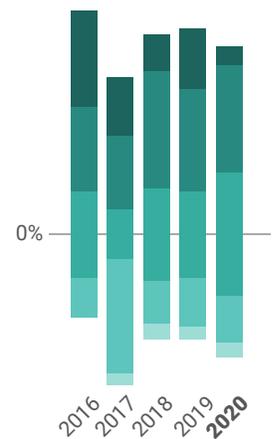
National



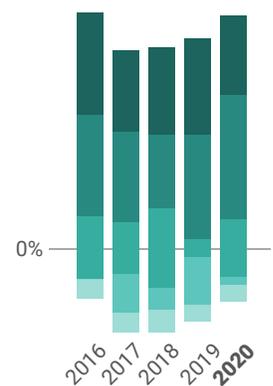
Confidence change due to COVID specifically



California



Texas



ENERGY STORAGE

Consumer demand

Both consumer interest in storage and storage attachment rate jumped by over 30% between 2019 and 2020.

The growth of interest in energy storage continues to accelerate throughout the country. According to Wood Mackenzie’s Energy Storage Monitor, each of the last seven quarters has set a new record for residential storage installations. In 2020, survey respondents report that nearly half of all customers expressed interest in storage, while the nationwide average attachment rate reached 20%.

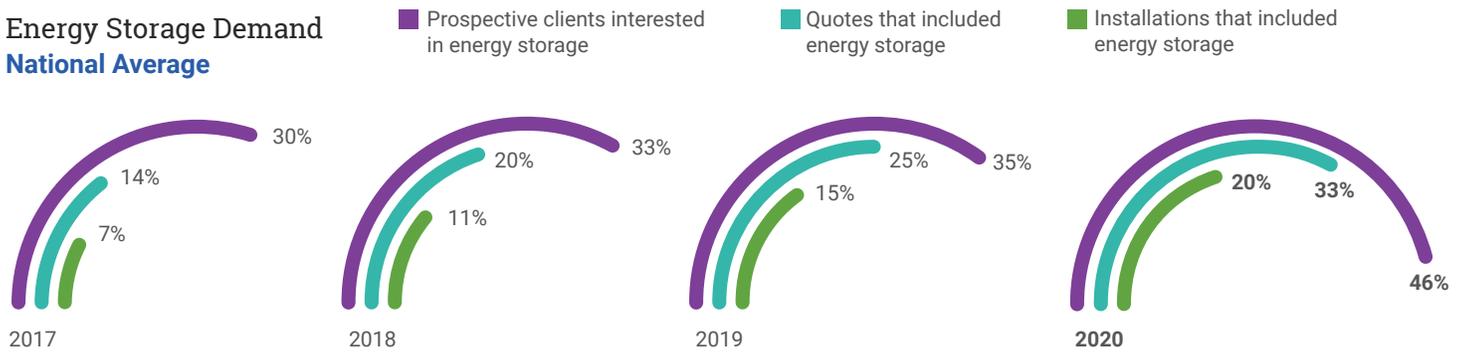
Storage interest on the rise

From the wildfire-induced outages and public safety power shutoff (PSPS) events on the West Coast to the millions of outages due to Hurricane Isaias on the East Coast, 2020 provided many reasons for homeowners to seek resilience. As a result, consumer interest in energy storage surged nationwide to nearly half of all customers in 2020, according to survey respondents. This trend is clearest in states like California (51% interest) and hurricane-impacted North Carolina (55% interest).

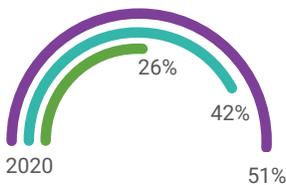
Interest increasingly turning into to sales

More so than in years past, consumer interest in storage also translated to a higher attachment rate in 2020, according to installers. In fact, the average reported percent of installations that included energy storage increased by a third from 2019 to 2020. Nowhere do a higher percentage of installations include storage than Puerto Rico, where survey respondents report a 94% attachment rate (note: small sample size).

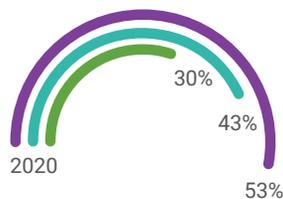
Energy Storage Demand National Average



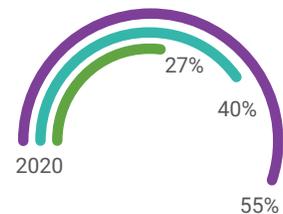
California



Florida



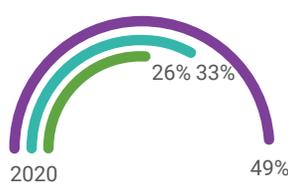
North Carolina



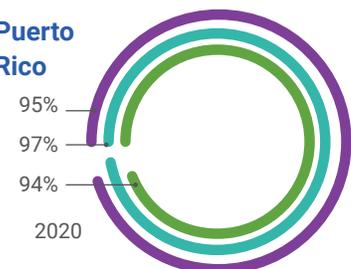
Texas



Arizona



Puerto Rico



ENERGY STORAGE:

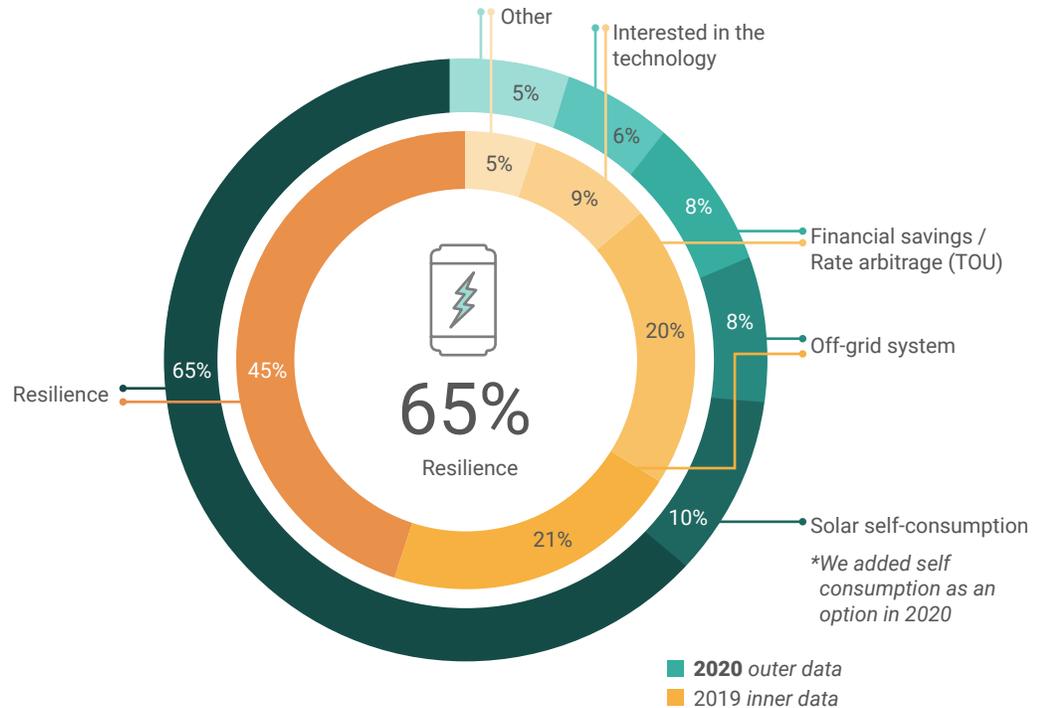
Primary Drivers and Barriers to Storage Adoption

In 2020, resilience became an even more powerful driver for storage adoption, while the cost of storage remained the primary barrier.

As energy storage adoption rates continue to increase nationwide, it's important to track the primary drivers and barriers to greater storage adoption. At a high level, consumer interest in storage remains driven primarily by a desire for emergency backup power: resilience. Meanwhile, the primary barrier to greater growth remains the cost of batteries, aided by the lack of storage-specific incentives.

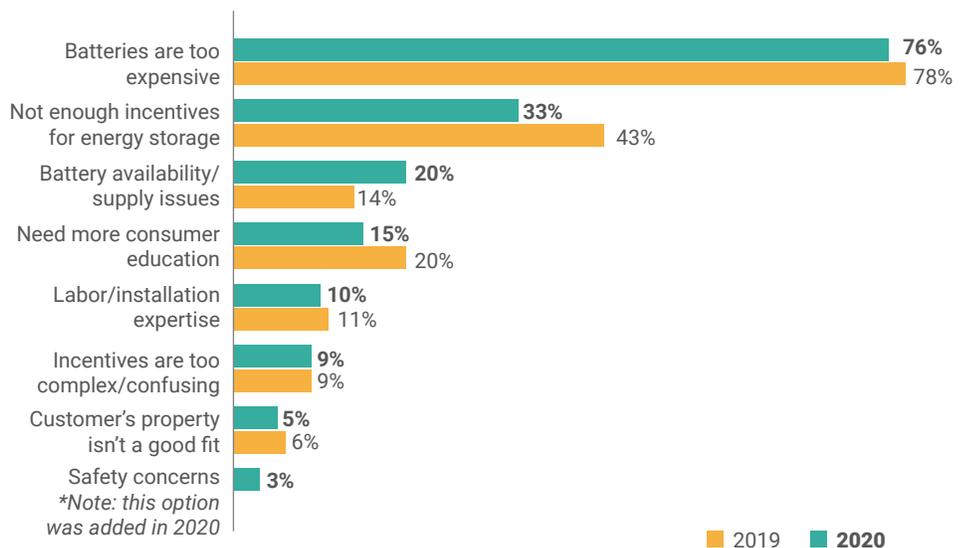
Resilience reigns supreme

65% of installers say that resilience—having backup power in the event of a major storm event or power outage—is the primary driver of consumer interest in storage, a sizable increase from 2019. Interestingly, while a fifth of installers cited financial benefits as the primary driver for storage in 2019, only 8% of respondents rated financial savings as the primary driver of storage interest in 2020.



Costs are a barrier, but incentives play a limited role

For the second year in a row, more than three-quarters of respondents point to battery costs as the primary barrier to increasing storage attachment rates, while two-fifths of survey respondents paint the lack of storage incentives as a barrier to adoption. Interestingly, when we asked the role that utility incentives play in driving consumer interest in storage, only a quarter of installers say that these programs play a significant role at the moment, possibly indicating a mismatch between program design and consumer awareness.



ENERGY STORAGE

Storage brands requested, stocked and installed

The mismatch between consumer preference and installer stocking persists: Tesla remains the most requested brand while LG Chem is the most stocked.

To get a feel for the current market dynamics from an equipment perspective, EnergySage asked which batteries shoppers most frequently request and which batteries solar companies stock and quote, as well as how satisfied installers are with the battery brand they offer.

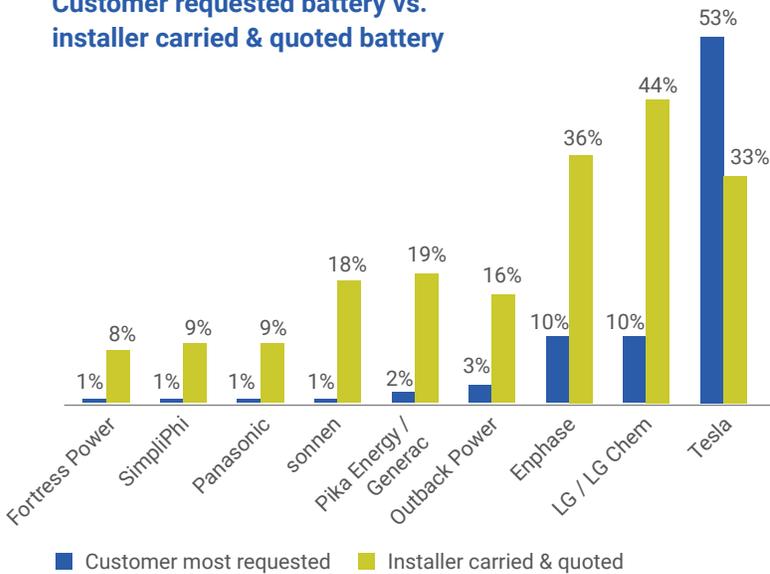
Tesla remains most requested; LG most stocked

For the third year in a row, Tesla remained the most widely requested storage brand by consumers, while survey respondents indicated that they are most likely to stock LG Energy Solutions (previously LG Chem) batteries. More than half of installers report that Tesla is the most requested battery brand by their shoppers, while the percentage of installers stocking LG batteries dropped from 56% in 2019 to 44% in 2020.

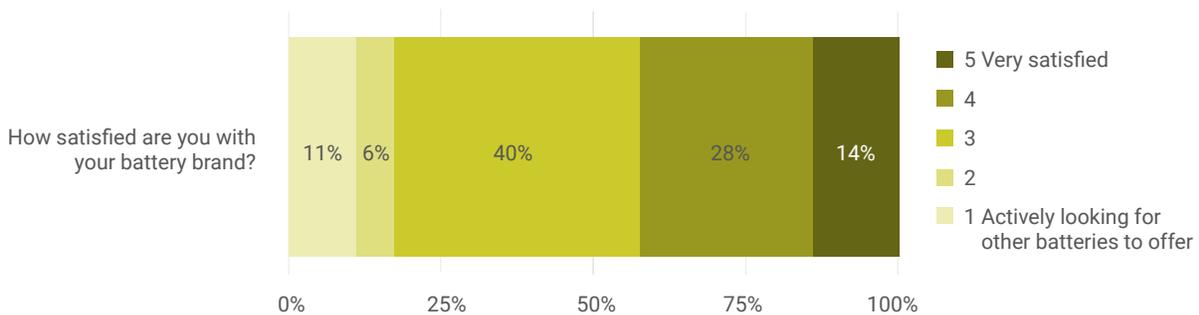
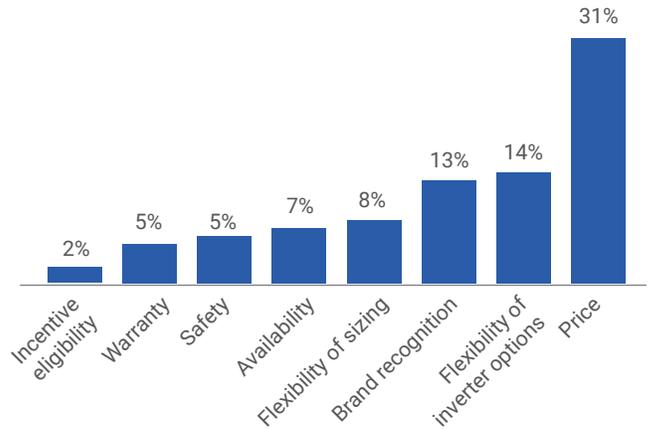
Low satisfaction with battery offerings

For the first year, we asked installers how satisfied they are with the brand of battery that they carry, quote and install. Only 14% of installers are very satisfied with their battery brand, while nearly three out of five survey respondents have a neutral or unfavorable view towards their battery brand.

Customer requested battery vs. installer carried & quoted battery



Installer battery choices



CUSTOMER ACQUISITION

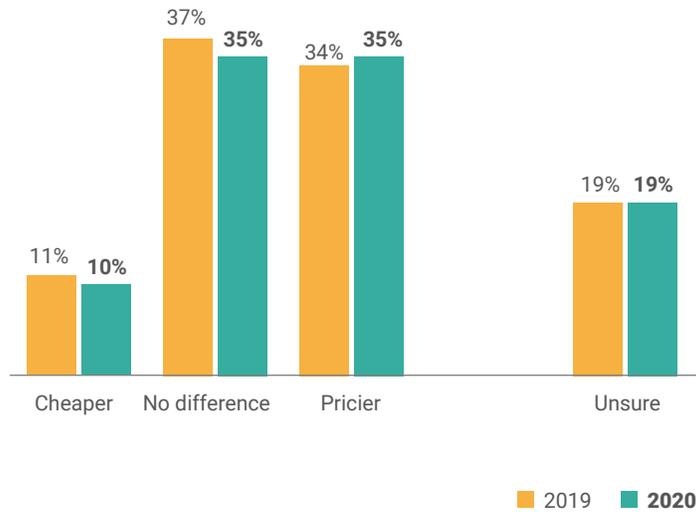
How has customer acquisition changed?

A third of installers report that customer acquisition costs increased for the second straight year.

While the cost of solar equipment continues to decline, the soft costs of solar remain high, with the cost—and difficulty—of customer acquisition playing an increasing role in the overall cost of solar. In 2020, installers report that customer acquisition became more difficult and more expensive.

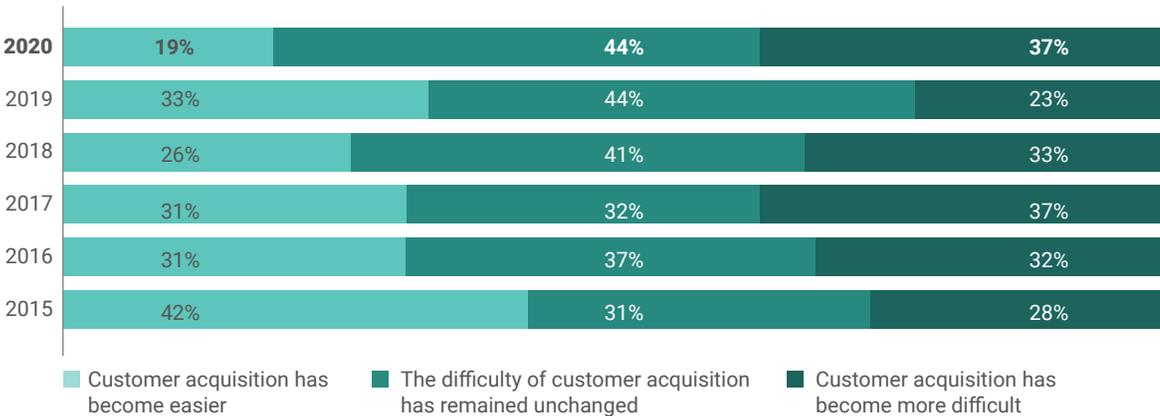
Customer acquisition costs are not decreasing

For the second year in a row, nearly a third of installers say that the cost of customer acquisition increased compared to the previous year. Meanwhile, only one in ten installers indicated that the customer acquisition costs decreased year-over-year.



Customer acquisition is not getting easier

In 2020, fewer installers than ever report that customer acquisition became easier. Instead, 37% found that customer acquisition became more difficult in 2020, while the same percentage reported no change in the ease of customer acquisition in both 2019 and 2020.



CUSTOMER ACQUISITION

Assessing acquisition channels

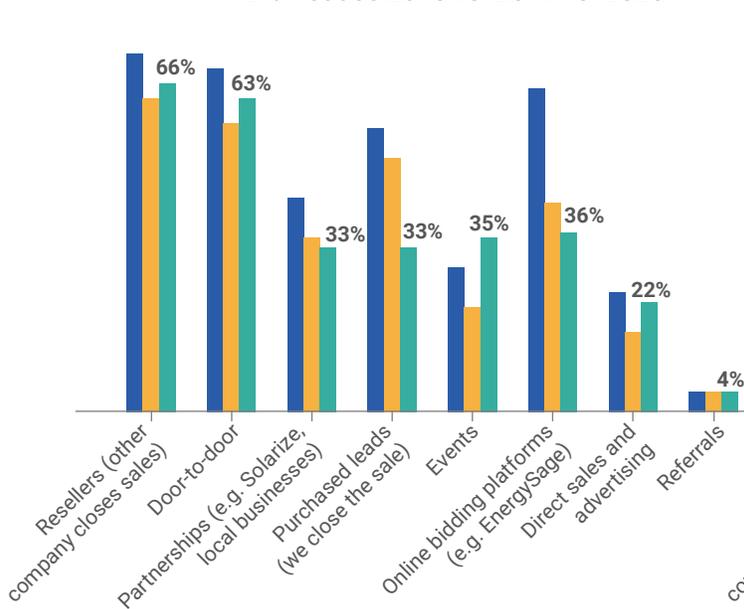
The percentage of installers frequently using online marketplaces increased again in 2020.

2020 brought changes to the way companies do business across sectors, and solar was no different. As an industry whose success has historically been driven in large part by in-person sales and acquisition channels, 2020 forced companies to accelerate the shift towards digital lead acquisition channels and sales.

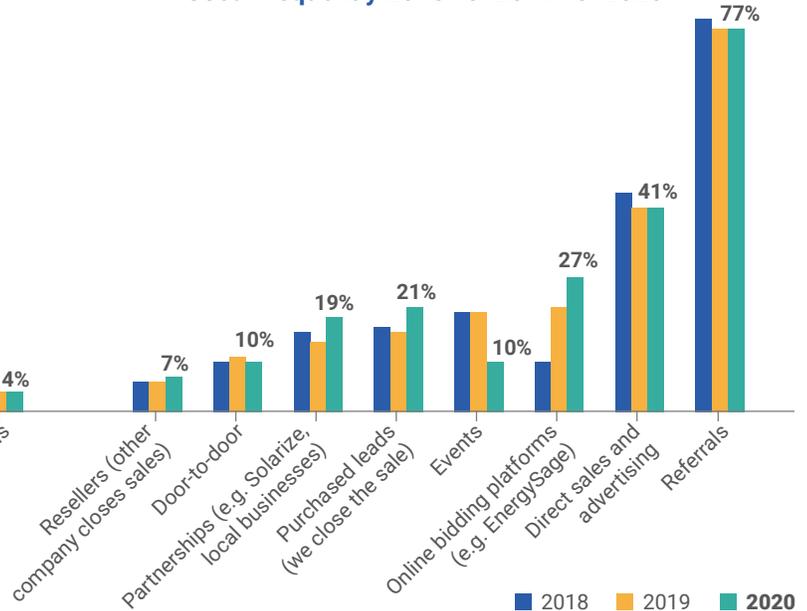
Events give way to online bidding platforms

As was the case in 2019, respondents to our 2020 survey indicated that they're using online bidding platforms (i.e., EnergySage) in even greater volumes than in years past. In 2020, it seems this shift to greater online lead acquisition and sales channels was primarily at the expense of events, as half as many installers reported relying on events as an acquisition channel in 2020 as compared to 2019.

Did not use 2018 vs. 2019 vs. 2020

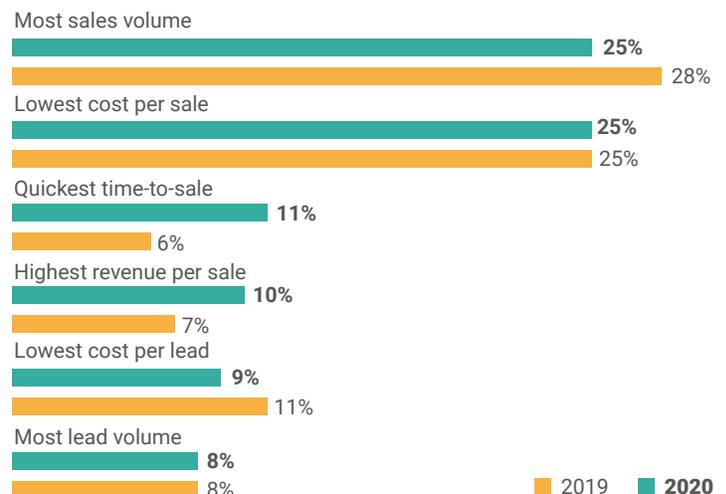


Used Frequently 2018 vs. 2019 vs. 2020



Higher emphasis on time-to-sale

For the second straight year, half of installers report they place the most emphasis on the customer acquisition channels with the highest sales volume at the lowest cost per sale. Interestingly, with all of the uncertainty of 2020, nearly twice as many installers indicated the quickest time-to-sale is the most important metric they use to evaluate acquisition channels, as compared to 2019.



CUSTOMER ACQUISITION

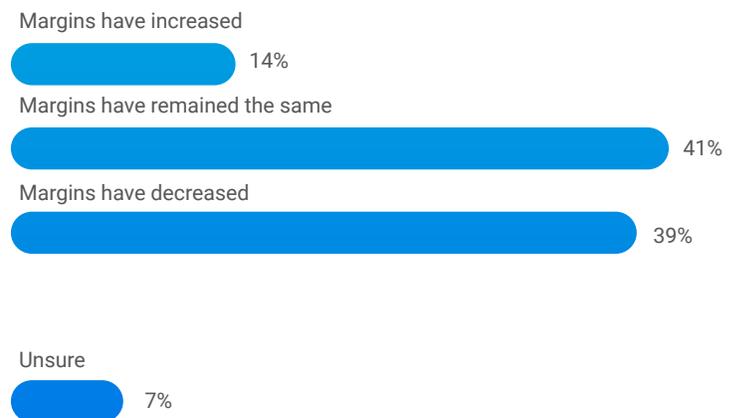
Cost breakdown & installer margins

In 2020, installers witnessed decreasing margins on their solar installs.

Although solar equipment costs continue to decline over time, the soft costs of solar—permitting, inspection, interconnection, customer acquisition, overhead and margin—remain high. In this year's *Installer Survey*, we asked installers to break down the percentage of each solar install that goes towards different hard and soft costs. Additionally, we asked survey respondents how margins had changed from 2019 to 2020.

Margins stagnate or decrease from 15% per install

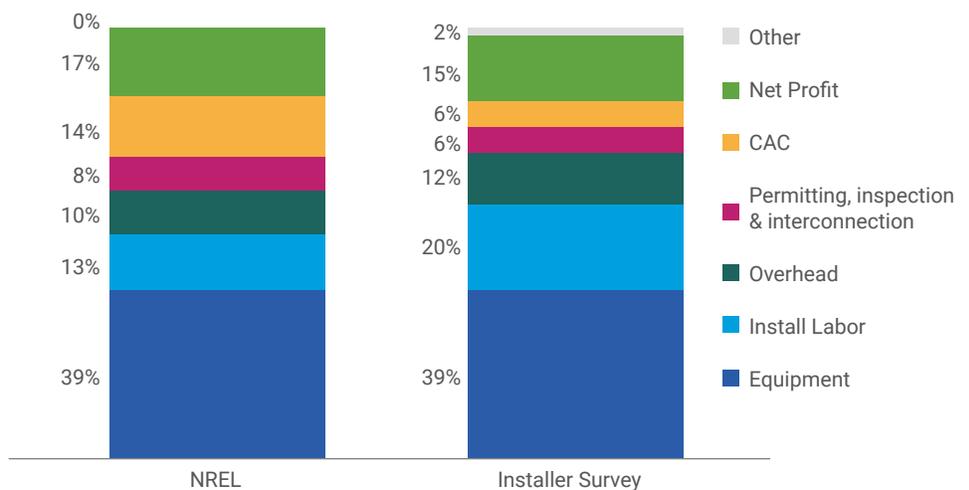
In 2020, installers reported average margins of 15% on solar installs nationwide, in line with NREL's reported average of 17%. However, when asked how margins had changed year-over-year, only 14% of installers say that margins increased, with the rest of survey respondents split nearly evenly between reporting no change in margins and seeing decreased margins.



Installer-reported cost break out tracks NREL analysis

In their recently released solar cost benchmarking analysis, the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) reported on the typical costs associated with different components of a residential solar install, from equipment to install labor, and from customer acquisition to net profit. Interestingly, installer reported percentages closely match NREL's reported national averages in all areas except for customer acquisition costs and install labor.

*NREL's Q1 2020 solar & storage cost benchmark analysis can be found here: www.nrel.gov/docs/fy21osti/77324.pdf



COMPETITION

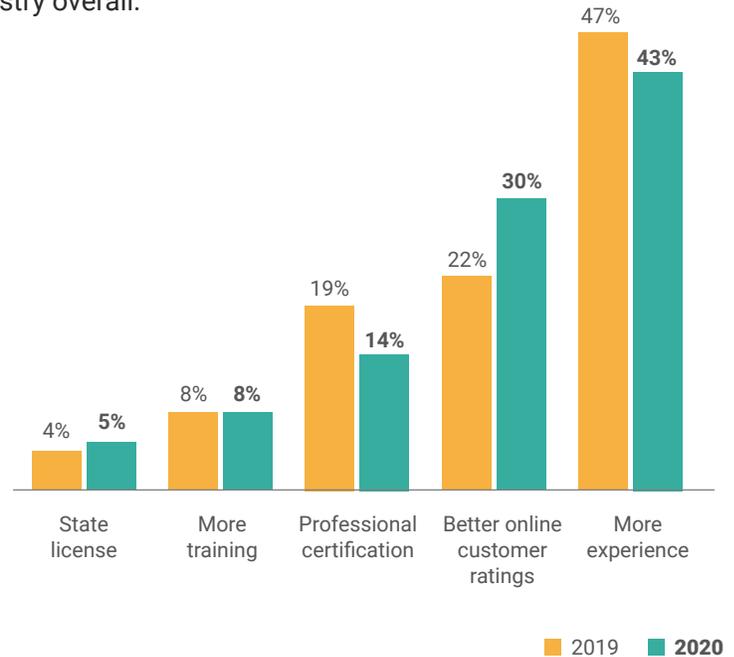
Primary differentiators and barriers to growth

Online ratings and reviews are increasing in importance as a primary differentiator for installers.

In a crowded solar market, installers have a keen sense for what characteristics separate them from their peers, as well as what factors are holding them back from further growth. Comparing the results to these two questions—and the ways they changed from 2019 to 2020—provides insights for opportunities to further expand the solar industry overall.

Primary differentiators

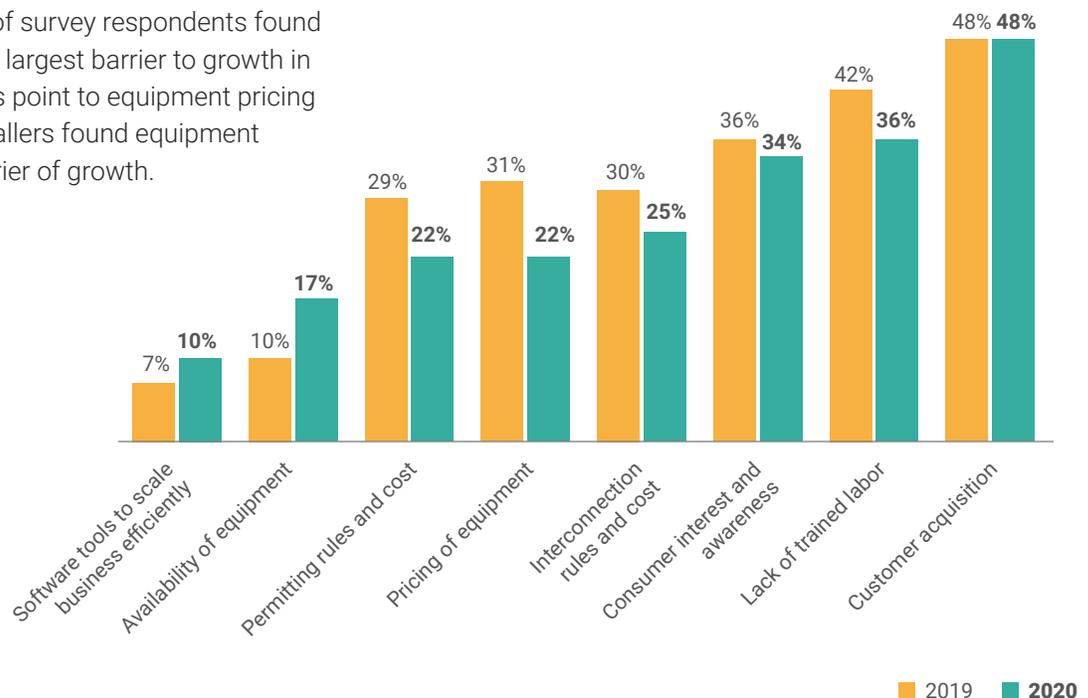
While the majority of survey respondents continue to point to more experience as their primary differentiating factor from their competitors, a higher percentage of installers found better online customer ratings and reviews to be a primary differentiator in 2020 than in 2019.



Primary barriers to growth

Installers could select the top three

As was the case in 2019, half of survey respondents found customer acquisition to be the largest barrier to growth in 2020. Although fewer installers point to equipment pricing as a primary barrier, more installers found equipment availability to be a primary barrier of growth.



COMPETITION

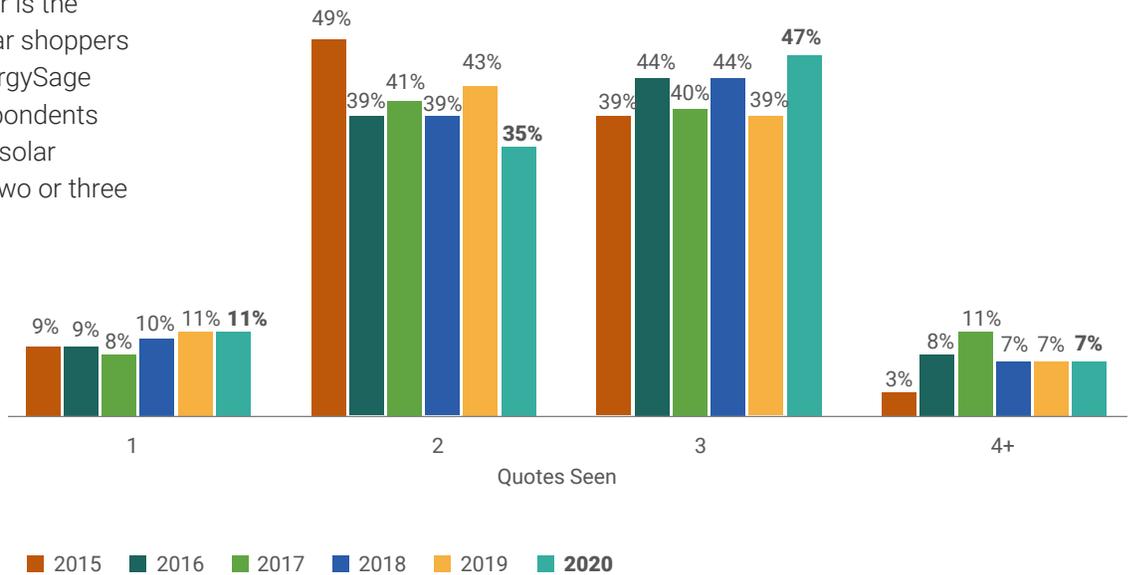
The competitive landscape: Quotes and challenges to sales

Nearly 90 percent of solar shoppers compare quotes from multiple installers.

Very few solar shoppers receive only a single quote for solar: eight out of every nine solar shoppers receive multiple solar quotes. With that in mind, EnergySage asked installers which factor most frequently contributes to lost sales.

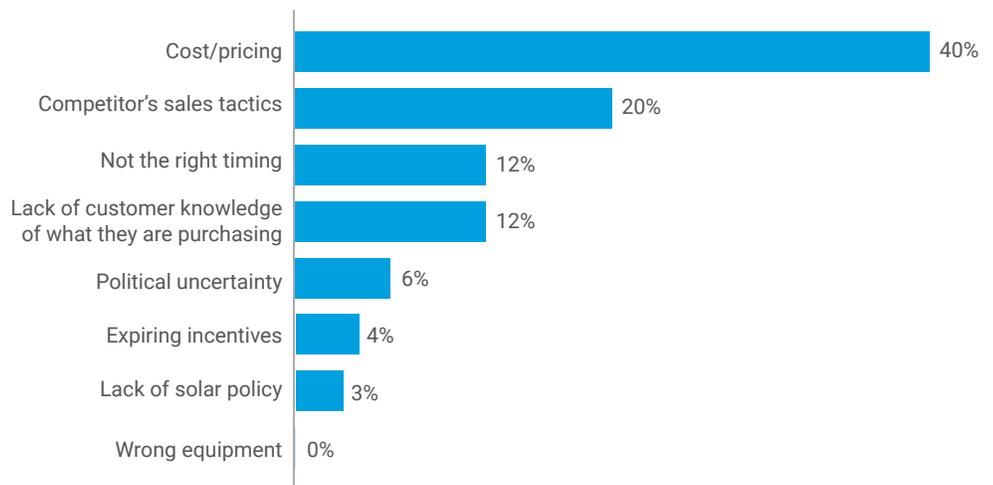
Nearly every solar shopper compares quotes

The most consistent response in the *Installer Survey* year-to-year is the number of quotes that solar shoppers receive: in all six years EnergySage has fielded the survey, respondents indicated that over 80% of solar shoppers compare either two or three quotes for solar.



Top reason for lost sales: pricing

Given the amount of solar shoppers who are comparing quotes, we asked respondents why they lose sales for the first time this year. Two-fifths of respondents report that they most frequently lose their deals due to the cost or pricing they offered, while an additional fifth of installers pointed to their competitor's sales tactics as the primary reason they lose sales.



EQUIPMENT

Installer equipment preference

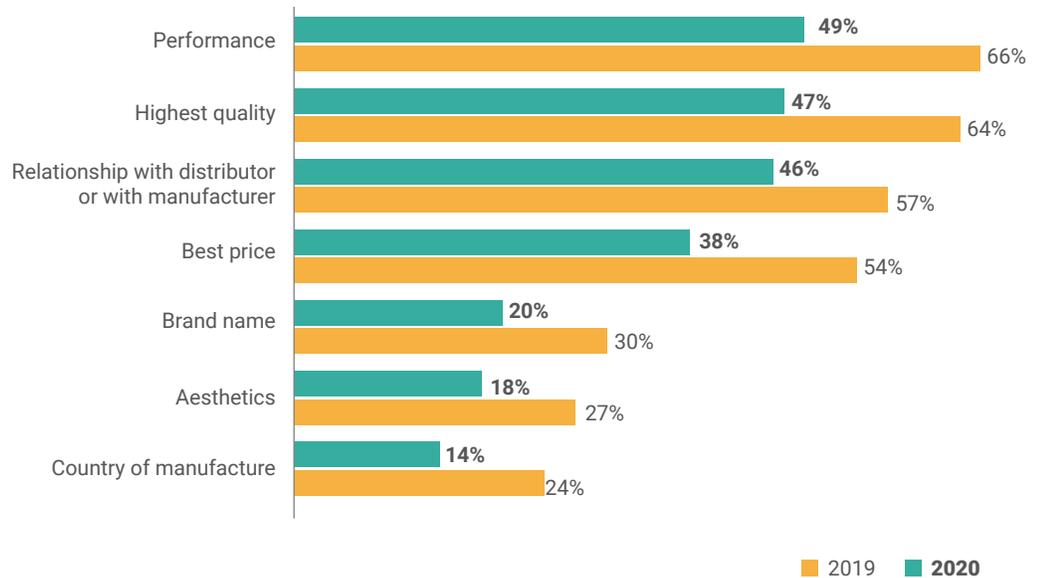
Although installers look for the best price with batteries, they look for the highest quality and performance with other solar equipment.

Before installers sell to solar shoppers, distributors and manufacturers must first sell to installers. To better understand what drives installer equipment choice, we asked which factors are most important when deciding which equipment to carry, quote and install, in addition to a question about the role that equipment brand name plays in installer success.

Installer equipment stocking preferences

Installers could select all that applied

More than price or brand name, installers report that what they look for when purchasing equipment is high-quality and high-performance solar panels, inverters and racking systems. This is in stark contrast to installer purchasing behavior for batteries, where price is the largest driver of installer battery preference.



How equipment brand name contributes to sales

In 2020, more installers reported that equipment brand name played a very significant role in closing sales than in years past. However, overall, installers are nearly evenly split on the role that equipment brand name plays in closing sales, with 33% saying it plays little to no role, 31% neutral, and 36% saying equipment brand name plays a significant or very significant role in closing sales.



EQUIPMENT

Consumer equipment preference

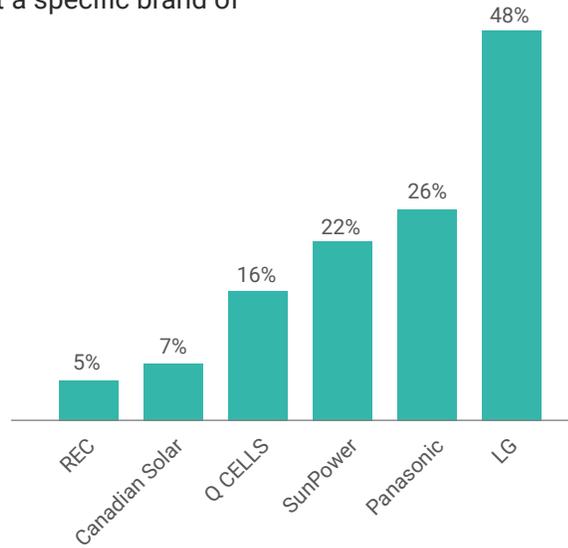
LG solar panels, Enphase inverters and Tesla batteries are the most commonly requested equipment brands.

As solar and storage adoption increases throughout the country, solar and storage equipment manufacturers are beginning to become household names: in fact, installers say 27% of customers request a specific brand of solar or storage equipment.



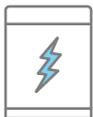
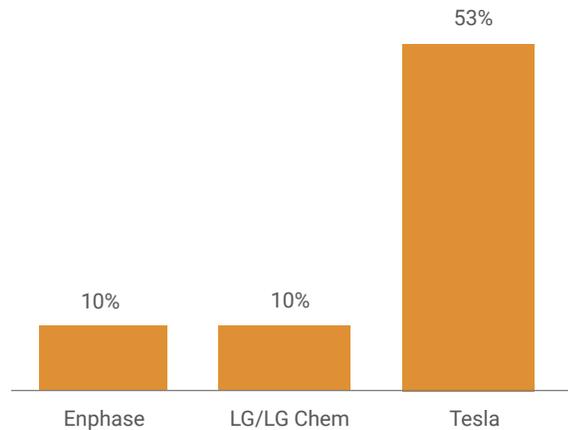
Most requested solar panels: LG *Installers could select all that applied*

The top three most requested solar panel brands are all recognizable brand names, with LG and Panasonic offering household electronics beyond just solar equipment, and with SunPower being a very well known brand within the solar industry.



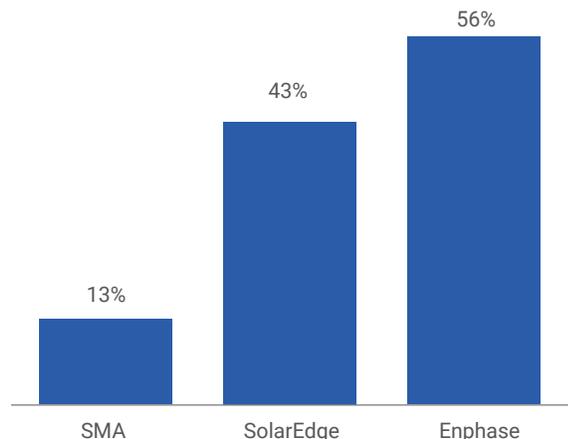
Most requested batteries: Tesla *Installers could select all that applied*

It should come as no surprise that the battery brand that consumers are most familiar with is also the most installed residential battery nationwide. Enphase and LG Chem/LG Energy Solutions are tied as the second most requested brand of storage.



Most requested inverters: Enphase and SolarEdge *Installers could select all that applied*

The two inverter manufacturers with the largest market share in the US residential solar market are the two most commonly requested solar inverter brands: Enphase and SolarEdge.



FINANCIERS

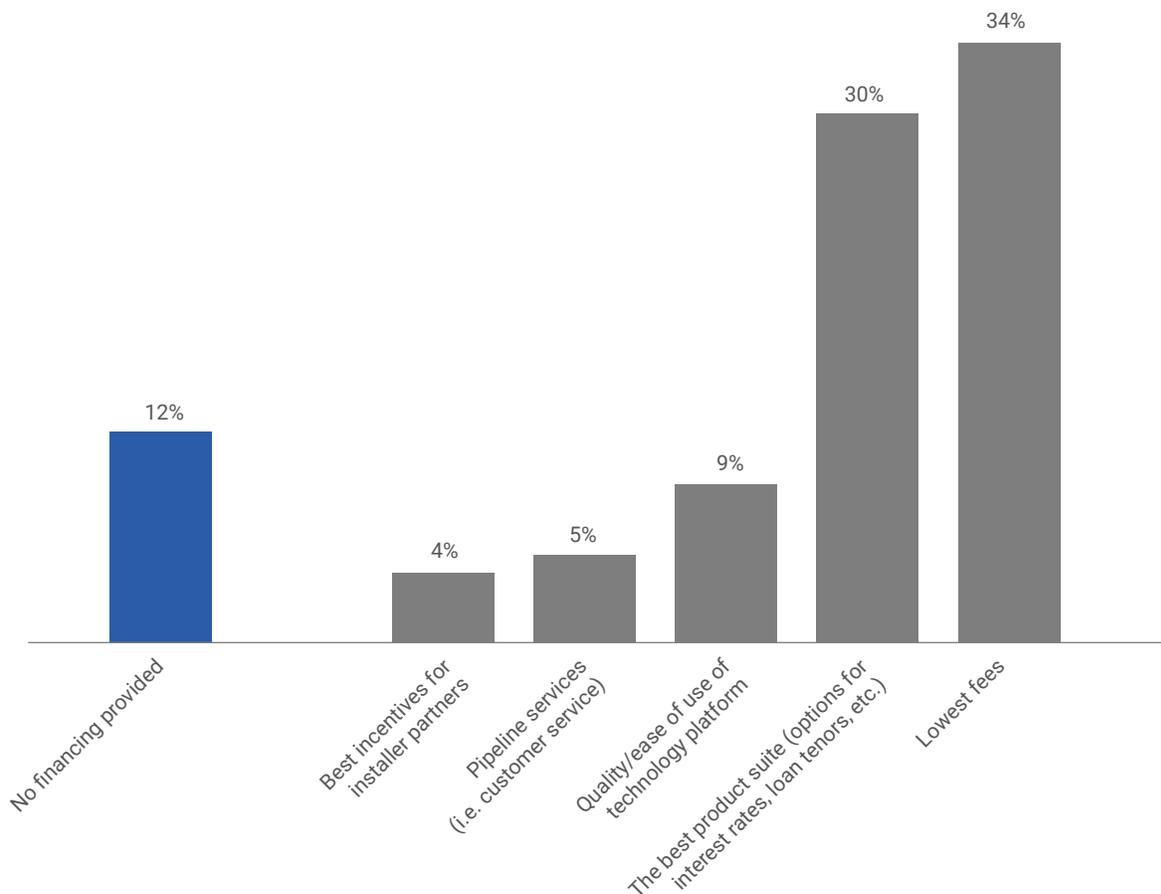
How to choose financing companies

88% of solar installers offer financing to their customers.

Just as the creative financing solutions afforded by solar leases and PPAs helped drive the first wave of growth for the residential solar industry, no-money-down, low-interest-rate solar loans are contributing to the continued growth of the solar industry. For the first year, the *Installer Survey* asked respondents how they choose their financing partner, what percentage of pre-install funding they receive from their financing partner.

The best loan products work both for installers and consumers

When choosing which financing partner to work with, installers look for two things: a financier with the best flexibility in consumer-facing products, and a financier with the best installer-facing fees. Interestingly, only 4% of installers select their financing partner based on the ones that offer the best incentives for their installer partners.



INTERCONNECTION

The time and cost to receive interconnection

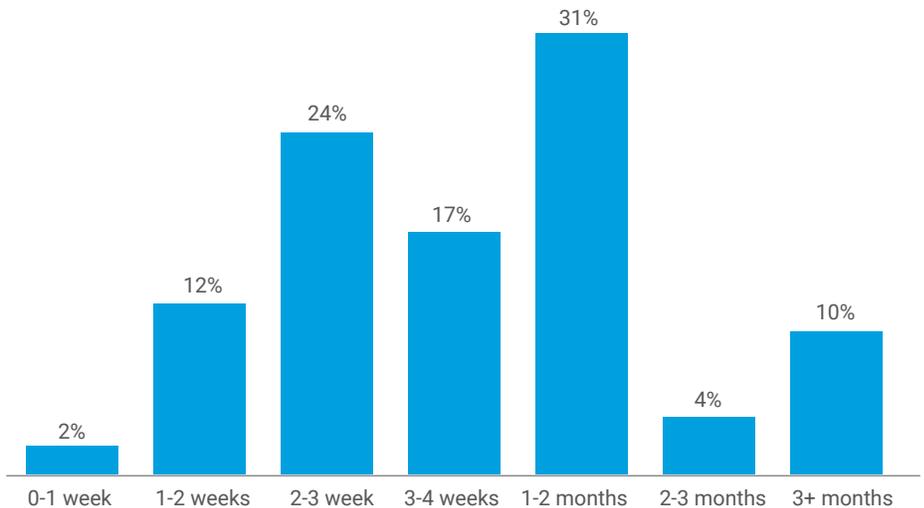
While 65% of permits are issued electronically, only 17% of installers are familiar with the SolarApp.

With solar technology cost having decreased significantly over the last decade, the primary remaining frontier for solar cost reductions is in soft costs. Outside of the cost of customer acquisition, one major component of soft costs are costs associated with permitting and interconnection.

Interconnection timeline:

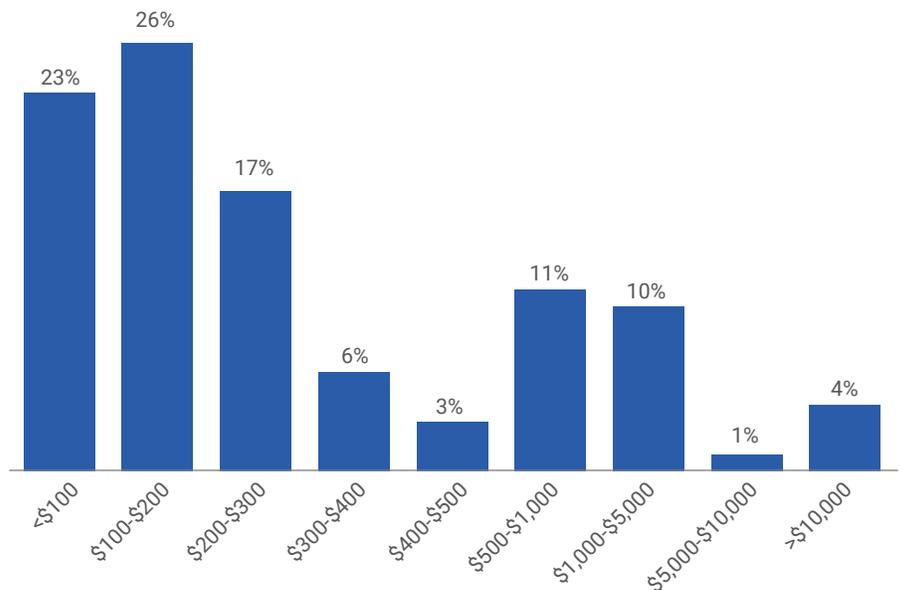
2 weeks to 2 months

For the second year in a row, we asked installers how long it takes to receive interconnection in the areas where they operate. Nearly three-quarters of installers report that interconnection takes between two weeks and two months to complete, while one in ten see interconnection timelines of greater than three months.



Interconnection cost: less than \$300, except for larger projects

Nationwide, the median reported interconnection cost for 2020 was \$95, down slightly from \$150 in 2019. Overall, two-thirds of installers see interconnection costs below \$300, while one in five experience interconnection costs of \$500-\$5,000, likely on larger, commercial or utility-scale projects.



The permitting digital transformation

For the first year, we asked installers about how they submit and receive their permits. While two-thirds have their permits issued electronically, less than a quarter receive their permits in three days. Additionally, only 17% of installers are familiar with SolarApp, despite the initiative's ability to improve electronic permit processing time and cost.

Learn more about the SolarApp:

SolarApp is an NREL-led effort to improve the ease and decrease the cost of permitting for solar and storage installs in the US. To learn more about this instant, online permitting initiative, check out solarapp.nrel.gov.

COMPANY OPERATIONS

Software utilized

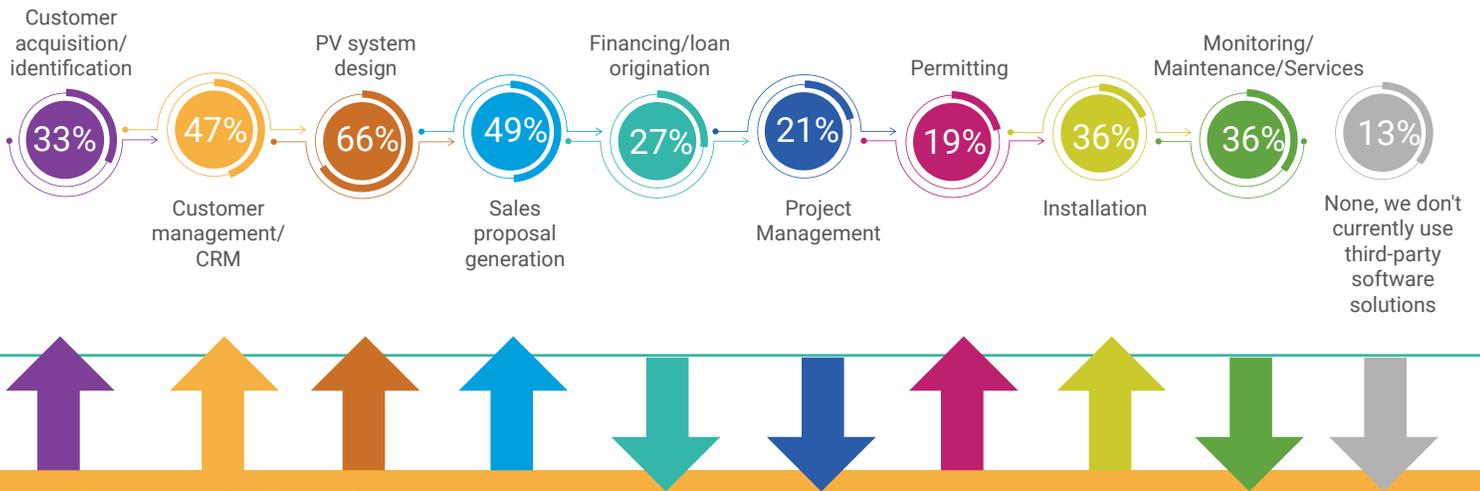
Three times as many solar installers used third-party software for customer acquisition in 2020 as compared to 2019.

Over the last few years, software products have become indispensable to the solar industry, helping installers from the beginning to the end of consumer life cycles. As was the case for many industries, 2020 was an impetus for solar companies to digitize ever more aspects of their business: 87% of solar installers use at least one third-party software solution.

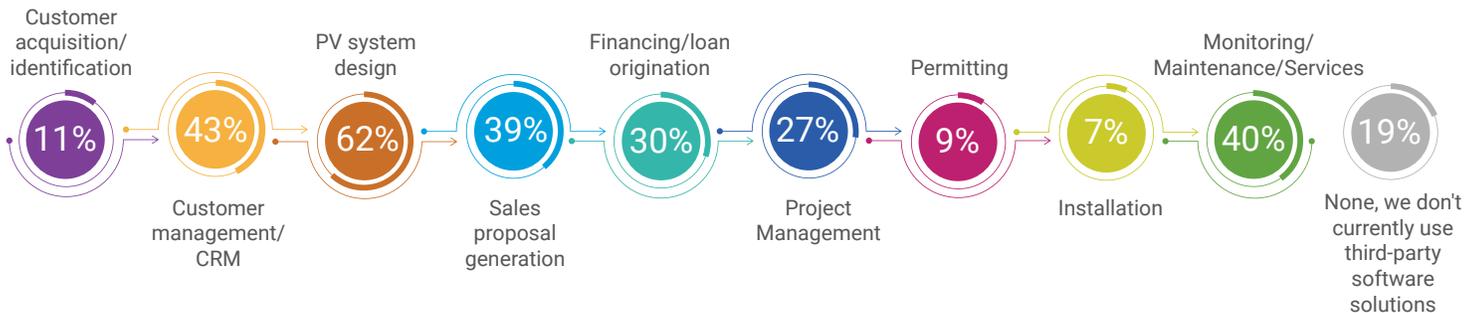
Software utilization increases nearly across the board

According to survey respondents, 2020 was a banner year for solar software: not only did a higher percentage of installers use third-party software solutions than in 2019 overall, software utilization increased across nearly every stage of the sales and installation cycle. Nowhere was this truer than in customer acquisition, permitting and installation, as three times as many installers used software for customer acquisition, twice as many used it for permitting, and four times as many used third-party software for installations in 2020 as compared to 2019.

Installer usage of software in 2020



Installer usage of software in 2019



↑ Increase year-over-year ↓ Decrease year-over-year

POLICY IMPACT

Section 201 Tariffs

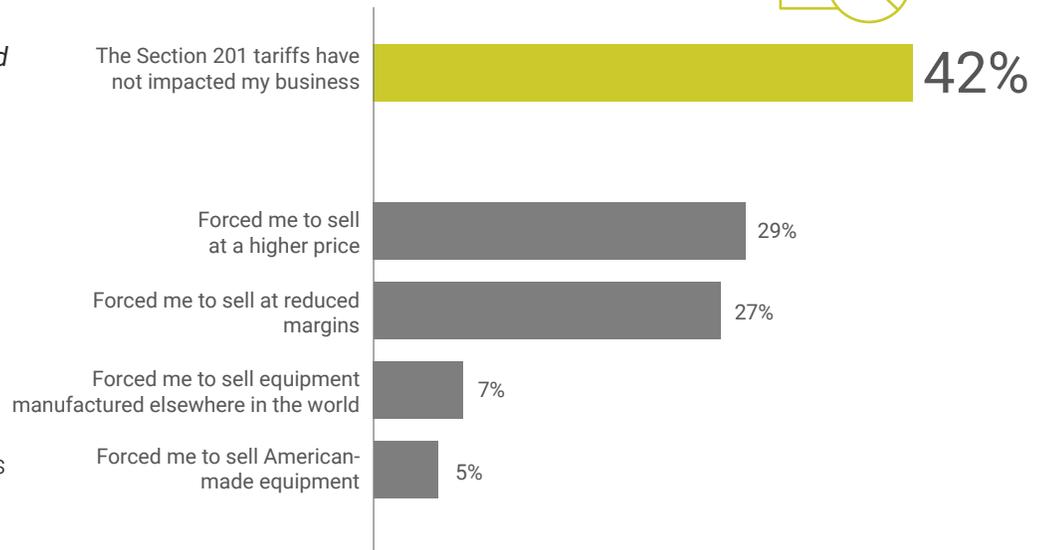
The success of the solar industry is closely tied to policy changes. In recent years, few policy changes have received as much attention as the Section 201 tariffs on imported solar goods. After asking installers if their business was impacted by the tariffs in 2019, in 2020 we asked installers how their business was impacted by the tariffs, if at all. And given the role that trade associations at the national and state levels play in advocating for beneficial solar and storage policies, we asked installers whether or not they are members of trade associations.

56% of installers were forced to sell at higher prices or reduced margins due to the Section 201 tariffs.

Section 201 tariffs impacted half of installers

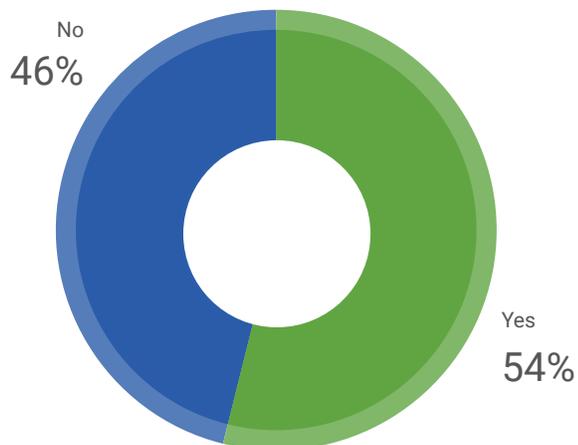
Installers could select all that applied

In 2019, 54% of survey respondents said the Section 201 tariffs have had a negative impact on their business. In 2020, the story was similar: while two-fifths of installers report no impact at all, 56% say the Section 201 tariffs either forced them to sell at higher prices to consumers, or to sell at reduced margins, indicating that the tariffs placed a tax either on solar shoppers or the installers themselves.



Trade association membership

Despite the significant role that industry trade associations play in driving the success of solar policy at the state and federal levels, only 54% of survey respondents are a member of a solar or storage trade association, such as the Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA), down slightly from 56% in 2019.



CERTIFICATION

The role of certification for today's solar employers

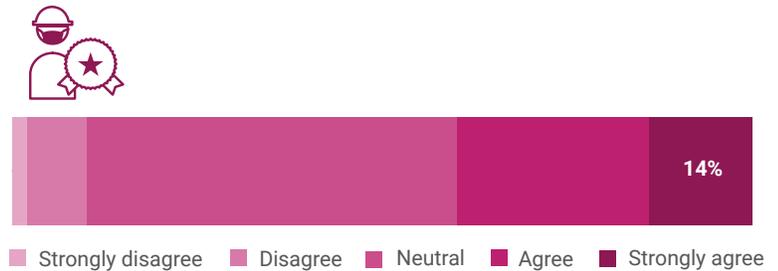
Two-fifths of installers say the pandemic has made certifications and credentials even more important for solar employment.

For the second year in a row, survey respondents indicated that a lack of trained labor is the second largest barrier to growing their business, behind only customer acquisition (page 14). At the same time, installers pointed to their experience in the industry as their primary differentiator from competitors for two straight years as well. With that in mind, NABCEP, the most widely recognized national certification organization for renewable energy professionals, asked installers about the impact of COVID-19 on the need for certifications.

 **71%** of veterans in the solar industry would use GI Bill reimbursements to advance their career in the solar industry

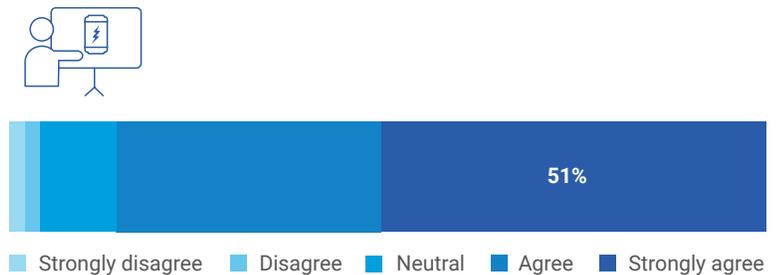
The pandemic has made certifications even more vital

COVID-19 impacted all facets of life in 2020, including employers' ability to find, hire and train an educated workforce. Given that a lack of trained labor is a primary barrier to growth for many companies, especially during the pandemic, we asked installers whether they found certifications and credentials to be an even more valuable tool for evaluating candidates during 2020. Two-fifths of respondents agreed: certifications are more important than ever for hiring the right candidates.



Installers value free, low-cost or GI Bill financed training

For the second year in a row, we asked installers whether access to free or low-cost training sessions is important to them to help meet their professional development goals. And for the second year in a row, half of respondents strongly agreed. Additionally, we asked installers if they would be willing to use GI Bill reimbursement to advance their solar careers: 71% of veterans said they would. Notably, only 16% of respondents to this year's *Installer Survey* are veterans, indicating the need to bring even more veterans into the solar workforce.



THREE YEAR PLANS

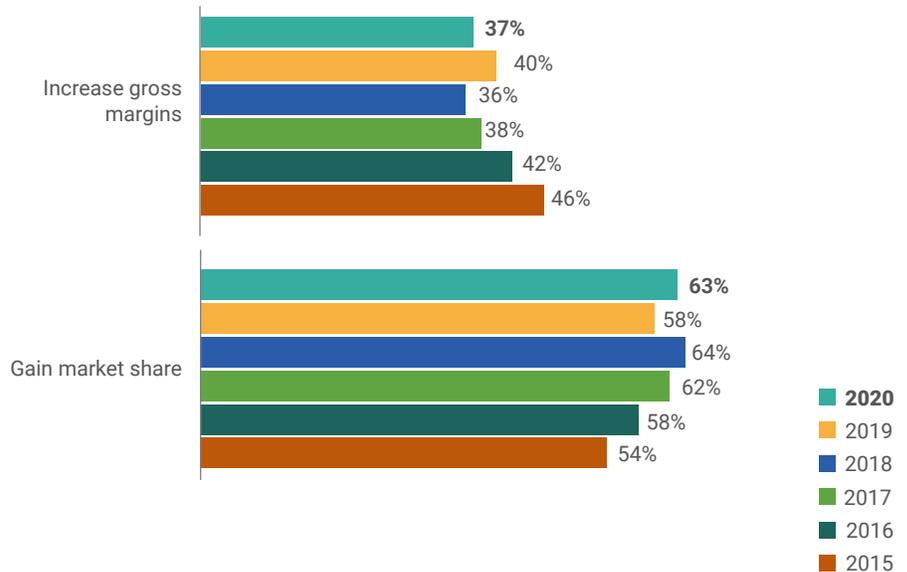
Gain market share or increase margins

Installers continue to place a greater emphasis on gaining market share than on increasing gross margins as a path to growth.

Each year, the *Installer Survey* asks installers about their three year plans for growth: will they seek to grow revenue through expanding their market share or by increasing their gross margins, and which activities will they undertake to reach those goals.

Market share vs. margins: which is more important?

For the sixth year in a row, a majority of installers indicated a preference for growing by gaining market share as opposed to increasing gross margins. A higher percentage of installers favor gaining market share in 2020 than in 2019, returning to the trend from installers in the first four years of the *Installer Survey*.



Top Strategies for Growth

The top strategies for growth—either those who plan to grow by gaining market share or those who plan to increase gross margins—all focus on getting more customers into and through their sales funnel more efficiently.

Top 5 strategies to gain market share

Installers ranked a total of nine options

1. Leverage new marketing and sales channels (e.g. online sales channels/partnerships)
2. Increase marketing and advertising spend to generate more leads
3. Hire more direct salespeople
4. Hire more installation crews
5. Offer more financing options

Top 5 strategies to increase gross margins

Installers ranked a total of ten options

1. Target customers with higher opportunity for profitability
2. Improve the efficiency of your sales processes
3. Use more cost-effective marketing and advertising strategies
4. Focus efforts on more profitable geographic areas
5. Increase price



About EnergySage, Inc.

EnergySage is the leading online comparison-shopping marketplace for rooftop solar, solar financing, energy storage, and community solar. Supported by the U.S. Department of Energy, EnergySage is now trusted by over 10 million consumers across the country to help them make smarter energy decisions through simplicity, transparency, and choice. Unlike traditional lead-generation websites, EnergySage empowers consumers to request and compare competing quotes online from a network of more than 500 pre-screened installation companies –

a formula that is proven to result in a higher rate of adoption, 20 percent lower prices on average for consumers, and significantly lower costs for renewable energy providers. For these reasons, leading organizations like Connecticut Green Bank, Duke University, Environment America, Kaiser Permanente, and National Grid refer their audiences to EnergySage.

Visit [EnergySage](#) for more information, and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#), and [YouTube](#).

