



TOWN OF CONCORD MUNICIPAL UTILITIES

ELECTRIC | WATER | SEWER | TELECOMMUNICATIONS

September 2022 – Broadband Updates

Concord Broadband is pleased to share the following updates and information from the past month. Please do not hesitate to contact us at broadband@concordma.gov should you have any questions, concerns, or feedback.

Operations

August 31st was the last day for Victor, one of Concord Broadband's Network Engineers, who is moving to a position that allows mostly remote work – of particular interest since he lives in Providence, Rhode Island. We wish Victor the absolute best in his career and are extremely grateful for his accomplishments in the last year and a half. Concord Broadband does have another Network Engineer, Thomas, who is on-call after Victor's departure. We have reached out to two separate vendors to secure additional assistance in the event of any unexpected issues.

In mid-August we advertised the Network Engineer position and received 28 strong applicants. We have conducted 2 first-round interviews and a second-round interview of the candidates. We are very excited that soon we may be able to announce news of filling this position.

On the Broadband Manager front, we did move an applicant forward to the second round and will be interviewing the individual in the next 7 days.

In addition to the usual installations and repairs performed by the Technicians, they also assisted on other projects in Town, including running fiber at the Keyes Road campus for the addition of security cameras as well as wiring the Light Plant garage for Wi-Fi to help with inventory management.

Network Services

Upgrades and Updates

As mentioned previously, we have procured replacement batteries for our distribution equipment at our primary data center. This equipment runs on DC power, so it requires specialized components to be installed and configured properly by a third-party. Due to space constraints, the vendor wanted to remove the old equipment before installing the new equipment, which would have resulted in downtime for customers.

We have changed the configuration of the racks at our data center and added a third power circuit, which will now allow the installation of the new gear before the old gear is removed, resulting in no expected downtime for this project.

Maintenance

The fiber splicing that was to take place in July is tentatively scheduled for the week of September 19th. Each night during the week, our vendor and staff will be cutting and re-splicing a number of fibers. This work is only expected to impact 55 customers for a short period of time, but we will advertise the maintenance window for all users in the event that there is an unintended impact elsewhere in the system.

We have a dedicated maintenance page on the Town's website with more information:

<https://concordma.gov/3144/Broadband-Maintenance>

I thank the CMLP and Broadband staff for working to minimize interruptions to customers on projects like this.

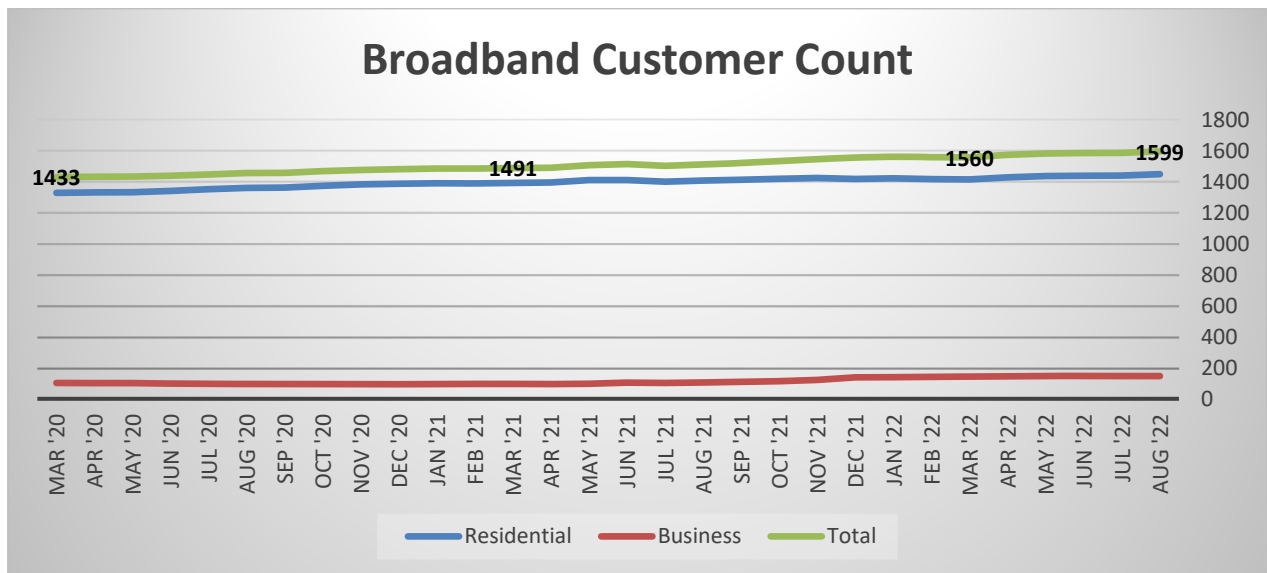
RFP 457: Broadband Help Desk Services

Concord Broadband advertised RFP #457 for Help Desk Services on July 21st. We had many interested parties request a copy of the RFP, and multiple addenda were issued to answer questions by those vendors. By August 19th, when we were set to open them, two proposals had been received. We found one that failed to meet the minimum requirements established in the RFP, and another from our current provider, Netegrity.

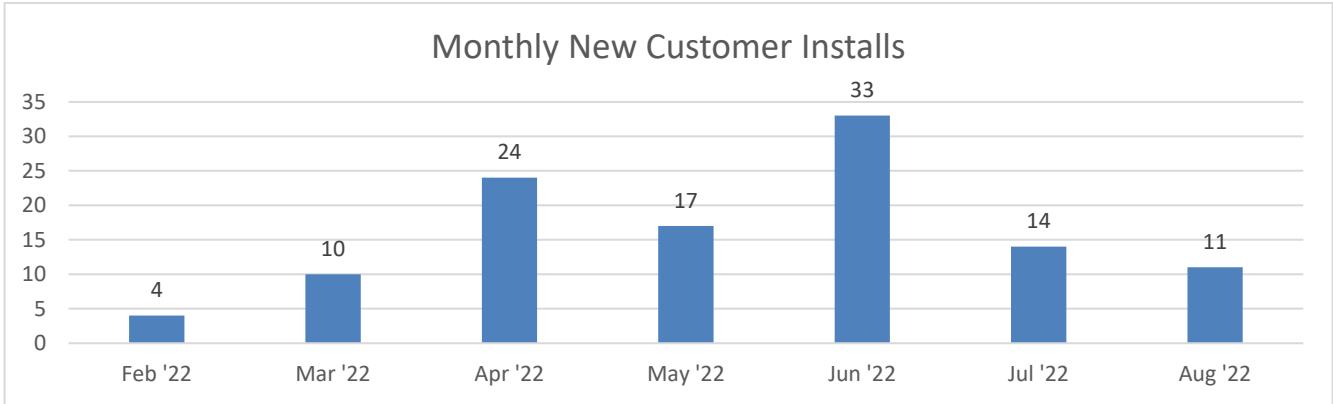
We have begun the steps of submitting a request to the Town Manager to approve the selection of a proposal, which will allow us to draw up an agreement and create a purchase order.

There will not be any gap in service for our customers. The first call for any troubleshooting should always be the Concord Broadband Helpdesk at (978) 318-3199.

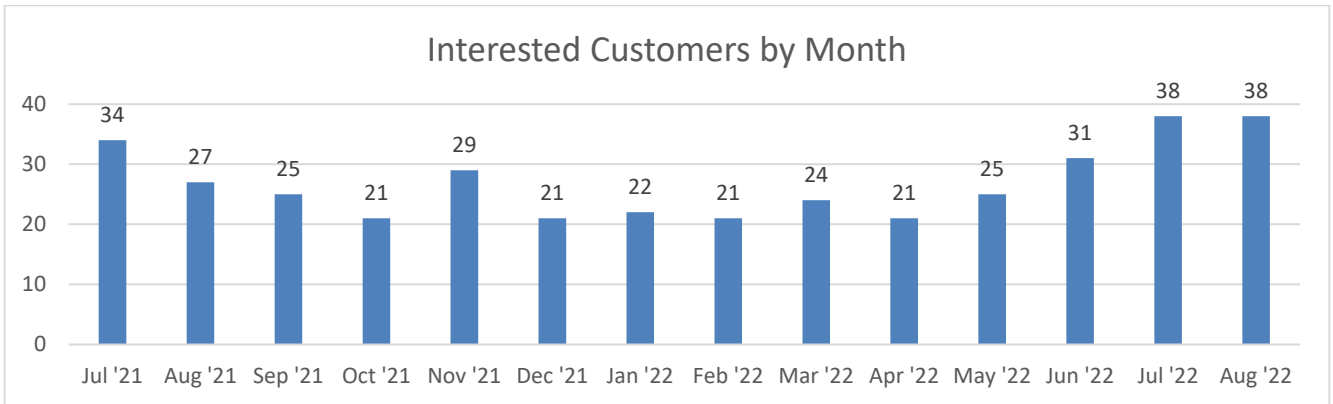
Monthly Metrics and Business Data



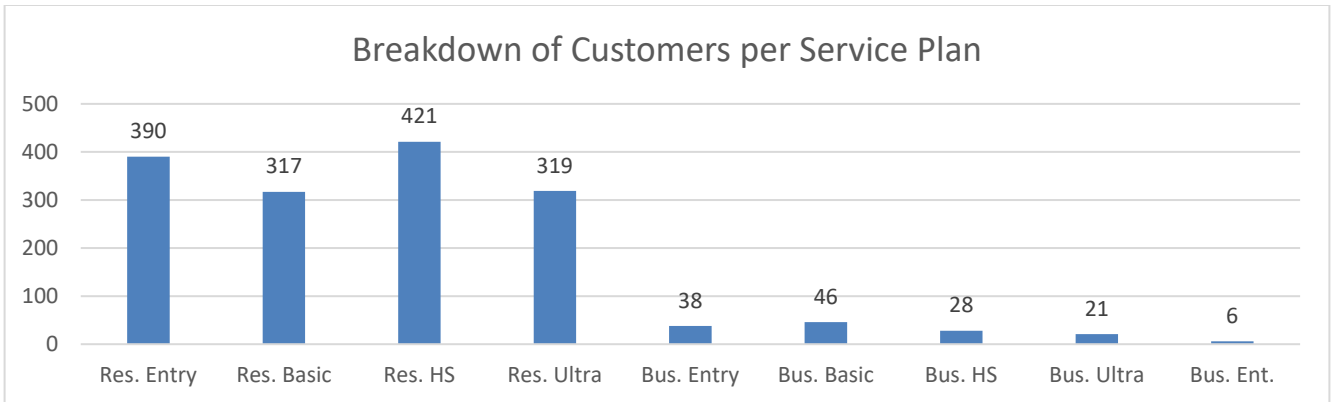
(Customer count: March 2020 – August 2022)



(The number of new installations completed each month)

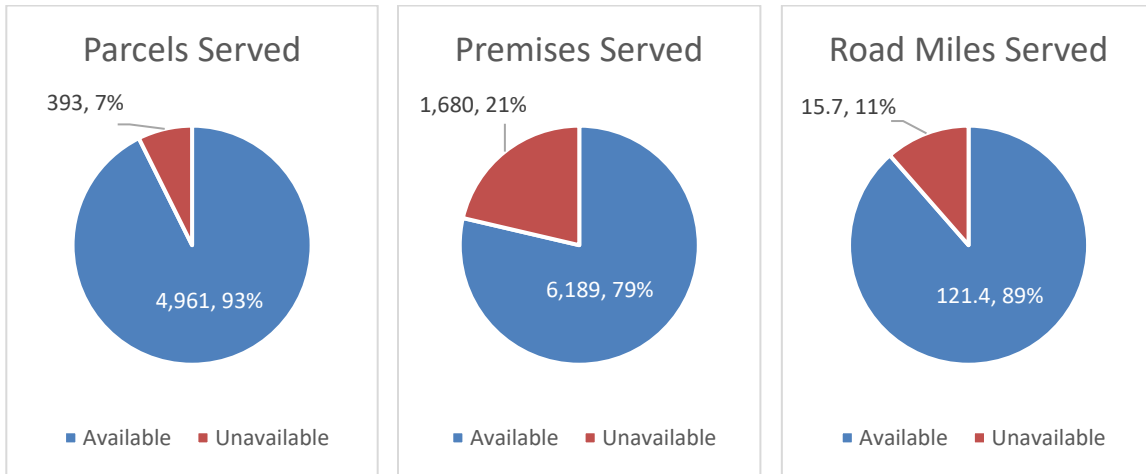


(This is the number of individuals who complete the Concord Broadband interest form on the Concord Website, whether they are in the current service area or not.)



(This is the number of each customer on our different service plans as of 8/31/2022.)

Quarterly Metrics



(As of 6/30/2022)

Survey and Rate/Speed Adjustments

At last month's meeting, we announced a Broadband Plan and Pricing survey that was available for customers and interested parties in Concord. We publicized this on the Town's website and through social media. I'm pleased to announce we got 297 responses, 239 of which were from customers. This represents a response from nearly 15% of current customers.

The purpose of the survey was to help inform a recommendation of how we can adjust rates and speeds while maintaining or improving customer satisfaction with our offerings.

We at Concord Broadband understand what an asset this service is to the community, and we strive to make it as cost effective as possible given the constraints of the system. As an example, cable internet (like that provided by Comcast) has known limitations: speeds can decrease if there is heavy demand on the network, and speeds are usually asynchronous – with uploads being much slower than downloads – due to the original configuration of the network. At Concord Broadband, because we are an entirely fiber optic network, there are no limitations on offering synchronous speeds, but we do have other challenges like higher cost of installation (since homes aren't wired for fiber like they are for coaxial cable), more maintenance (since fiber is more brittle than coaxial cable, and people seem to move their ONTs around), and physical limitations of the network construction and design¹.

¹ The two most notable being not enough slack built into the system for maintenance and splicing (which is what slows down installations during the winter), and the planning surrounding Passive Optical Network (PON) implementation, which can cause saturation of PON, limiting what speeds we can offer to customers on certain networks.

Our goal is to continue to provide this amazing resource at speeds that customers want at affordable rates, and we used this survey to collect information to inform our plan.

What follows are the key takeaways from the survey results (full summary is at the end of this document):

- Most survey respondents were residential customers (235 residential vs 4 business).
- 95% of customers are happy with their service.
- 79% of respondents are satisfied with the speeds we offer today.
- Of the 61 people not satisfied with their speeds, 46 (75%) are not satisfied because speeds are too slow.
- 78% of respondents feel the speeds we offer are competitive.
- 36% of respondents feel the prices we charge would discourage someone from signing up.
- Respondents' highest priority was offering higher speeds.

We plan on analyzing this data further to come up with a recommendation for a rate/speed change to be considered at the October 2022 Light Board meeting.

Appendix

Fiber Broadband Completion Task Force's Draft Report Goals

Goal	Type	Priority	Responsible Party	Additional Info.
Policies (p.39)				
• Universal Access	Policy	Highest	Select Board/Town Meeting	
• Expansion outside current territory	Policy	Low	Select Board/Town Meeting	
• Support Economic Vitality, Sustainability, Equity & Inclusion	Policy	High	Select Board/Light Board/TM Economic Development	
• Affordable Housing	Policy	Medium	Select Board/Housing Groups	
• Public Safety	Policy	Medium	Select Board/Town Manager	
• Education	Policy	Medium	Select Board/School Dept.	
• Government Access (PEG)	Policy	Medium	Select Board/PAAC	
Recommended metrics for tracking (p.41)				
• Parcels served	Metric	Medium	Town Staff/Light Board	Complete; will report quarterly
• Premises served	Metric	Medium	Town Staff/Light Board	Complete; will report quarterly
• Road miles served	Metric	Medium	Town Staff/Light Board	Complete; will report quarterly
• Subscribers	Metric	High	Town Staff/Light Board	Complete; will report monthly
• Take rate	Metric	Medium	Town Staff/Light Board	Working on this
• Churn	Metric	High	Town Staff/Light Board	Working on this
• Installations	Metric	Highest	Town Staff/Light Board	Complete; will report monthly
Governance (p.39)				
• Track progress against completion	Metric	Highest	Light Board/Town Staff	Working on this
• Rate of return policy	Policy	High	Light Board/Town Staff	
• Financial goals with regular reporting	Policy	High	Light Board/FinCom	
• Retained earnings and reserve policy	Policy	High	Light Board/FinCom	

Goal	Type	Priority	Responsible Party	Additional Info.
Strategic Planning Goals (p.43)				
• Marketing and growth	Metric	High	Light Board/Town Staff	
• Business return	Policy	High	Light Board/Town Staff	
Budgeting Process for Fiber Expansion (p.41)				
• Expand to fill existing opportunities	Planning	High	Light Board/Town Staff	
• External funding sources	Research	Medium	Light Board/Town Staff	Working on this
• ARPA Relief Funds Allocation, incl. Lost Revenue	Finance	Highest	Select Board/Town Manager	
• Review/Confirm Internal Loan Findings	Finance	Highest	Financial Audit Comm/Staff	Working on this; preliminary discussion at the FAAC meeting
• Review and Rescind PILOF to MMN	Finance	High	Select Board/Town Manager	
Capital Planning Process (p.42)				
• Review/Revise Debt financing schedule	Policy	Highest	Light Board/Town Staff	
• Quantifying cost of expansion	Planning	Medium	Town Staff	
• How to fund expansion	Planning	Medium	Light Board/Town Staff	
• Revise/refine methods for computing ROI	Planning	Medium	Light Board/Town Staff	
Construction and Logistics (p.42)				
• Vibratory plow – direct buried fiber cables	Operations	Medium	Town Staff	Working on this
• Revise/Refine Communication conduit construction standards and guidance	Policy	Medium	Town Staff	
• Integrate Fiber construction with the Roads Program – focus on Streets without fiber that already have underground electric	Planning	High	Town Staff	Working on this

Concord Broadband Plan and Pricing Questionnaire

297
Responses

17:14
Average time to complete

Closed
Status

1. Are you a current customer of Concord Broadband?

- Yes 239
- No 58

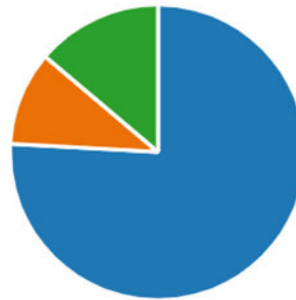
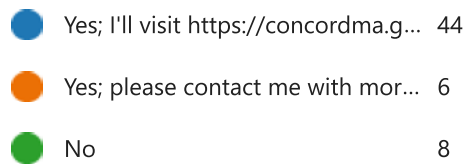


2. Are you happy with your service?

- Yes 227
- No 12



3. Are you interested in signing up for service?



4. Would you like to provide feedback on why you are not happy with your service?

12
Responses

Latest Responses

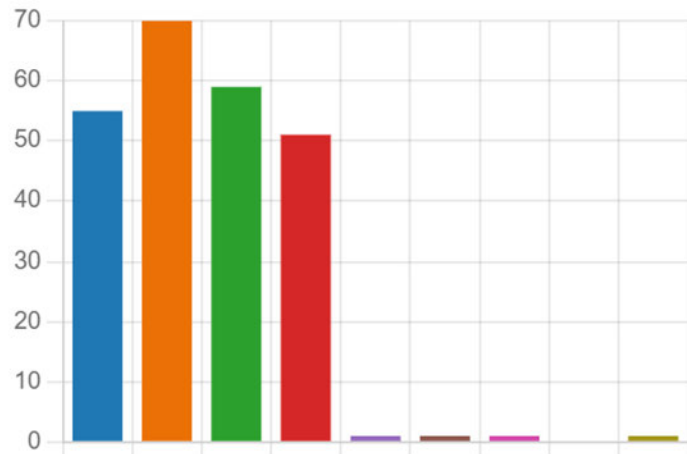
5. Please enter your name and an email address or phone number below

6
Responses

Latest Responses

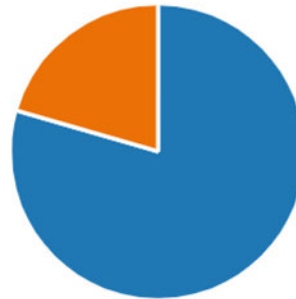
6. What service do you have?

● Residential Entry (35/35)	55
● Residential Basic (70/70)	70
● Residential Hi-Speed (150/150)	59
● Residential Ultra (300/300)	51
● Business Entry (70/70)	1
● Business Basic (150/150)	1
● Business Hi-Speed (275/275)	1
● Business Ultra (400/400)	0
● Business Enterprise (700/700)	1



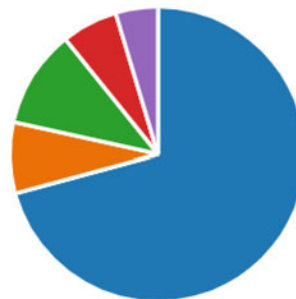
7. Are you satisfied with the speeds Concord Broadband offers?

● Yes	236
● No	61



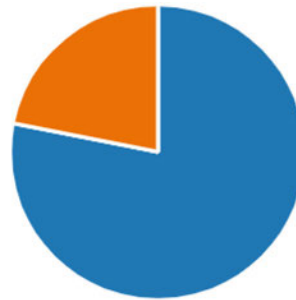
8. What are the biggest reasons you are not satisfied with the speeds (not prices) Concord Broadband offers?

● Speeds are too slow.	46
● There are too many different sp...	5
● There are not enough different ...	7
● Broadband is not available at m...	4
● I don't know the difference bet...	3



9. Do you feel the speeds Concord Broadband offers are competitive?

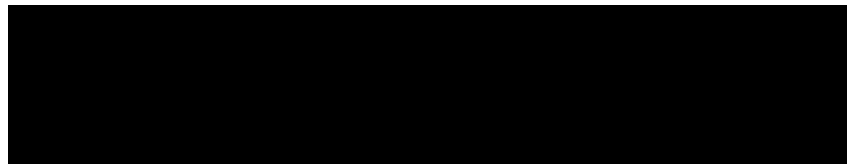
● Yes	232
● No	65



10. If you could request any speed, what would you have, and what would you be willing to pay for it? (Example: "100mb/s for \$65")

189
Responses

Latest Responses



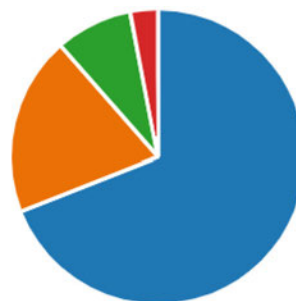
11. Do you feel the prices for Concord Broadband would discourage anyone from signing up?

● Yes	106
● No	191



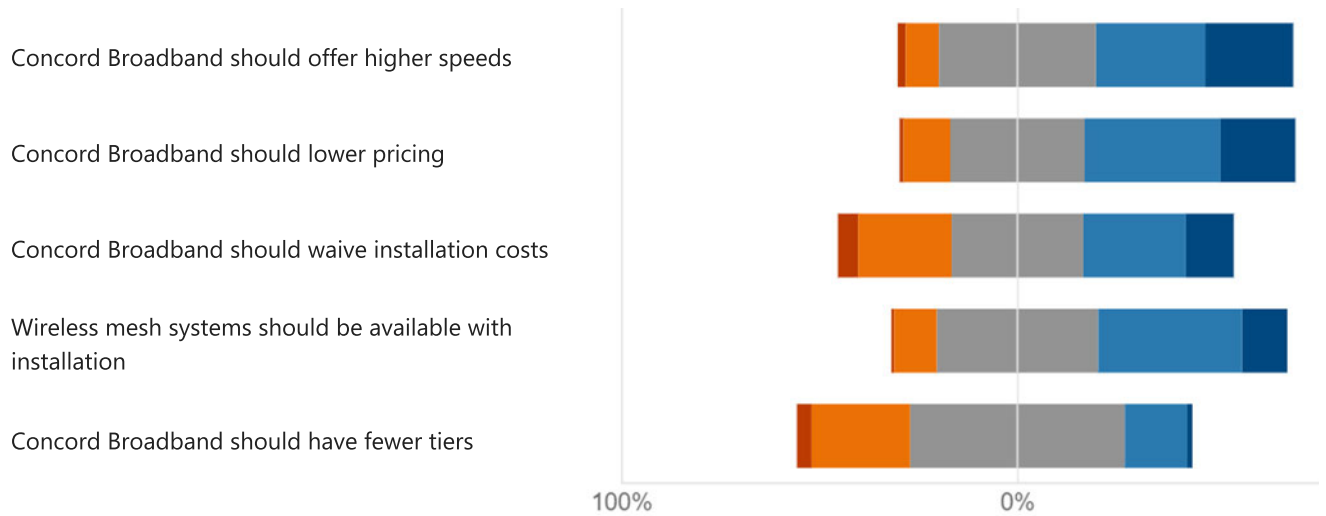
12. How much more per month would you pay per month to double your speed?

● \$10	205
● \$20	58
● \$30	25
● \$50	9



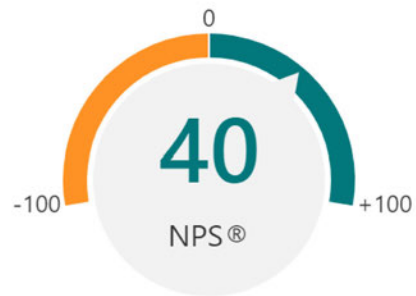
13. Please state whether you agree or disagree with the statements below

■ Strongly Disagree
 ■ Disagree
 ■ No opinion
 ■ Agree
 ■ Strongly Agree



14. How likely are you to recommend us to a friend or neighbor?

Promoters	169
Passives	77
Detractors	51



15. Do you have anything else you'd like to tell us?

175
Responses

Latest Responses

