Africa Enterprise Challenge Fund

Lean Data Insights
External Aggregate Report





Welcome To Your 60dB Results

We enjoyed hearing from 7,163 customers of AECF Portfolio Investees – they had a lot to share!

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Introduction

A brief overview of 60 Decibels, AECF, and the partnership over time.





AECF (Africa Enterprise Challenge Fund) is a leading non-profit development organization that supports innovative enterprises in the agribusiness and renewable energy sectors with the aim of reducing rural poverty, promoting resilient communities, and creating jobs.

Over the course of 13 years, they have supported over 375 businesses in 26 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, impacted more than 30 million lives, created over 27,000 direct jobs, and leveraged US \$771 million in matching funds.

60 __decibels

60 Decibels is a global, tech-enabled impact measurement company that brings speed and repeatability to social impact measurement and customer insights. We provide benchmarks of impact performance, enabling organizations to understand impact relative to peers and set performance targets.

We have a network of 1,000+ researchers in 80+ countries and have worked with more than 1,000 of the world's leading impact investors, companies, foundations, corporations, NGOs, and public sector organizations.

60 Decibels and AECF Partnership

Since 2021, 60 Decibels has partnered with AECF to conduct Lean Data studies with 15 investees and spoken to their customers to understand more about their usage patterns, experience, satisfaction, feedback, and impact. Using the 60 Decibels Energy Benchmarks, we are able to look at their performance relative to their peers in the sector and share actionable insights on what they can do to celebrate their impact and how they can serve their customers better.

Methodology

Sampling:

We used a random sampling method in each Lean Data study. Investees were asked to provide a full customer list with us along with some key datapoints such as region, product type, etc.

After checking for duplicate database entries, we randomly selected the sample for the interviews. To achieve sufficiently robust significance levels, we interviewed ~250-275 respondents per project per investee. This sample size is based on a confidence level of 90% with a margin of error of 5% for customer base sizes between 5,000 and 5 million.

An overview of the research process used in the projects included in the report.

Methodology

Survey Mode Phone interviews

Average response rate 76%

Average survey length 19 minutes

Countries covered 10

Languages in which surveys were conducted:

Amharic, Bambara, Changana, English, French, Krio, Moore, Ndebele, Oromo, Portuguese, Shona, Swahili, and Tamil.

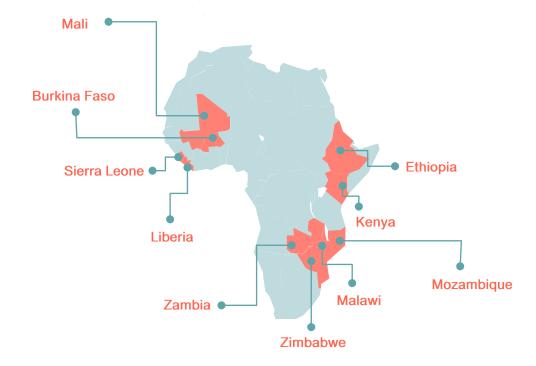
Report Overview

In this report, we have included data from 15 Lean Data studies commissioned by AECF plus the results of Lean Data studies funded by other partners with 10 AECF investees (consent was given from the companies). For 1 company we conducted projects in two countries.

Project results have been anonymised throughout the report to protect data. Projects are displayed as Project 1 to 28.

From February 2020 to January 2023, 60 Decibels completed Lean Data studies by talking to 7,163 customers of 25 AECF supported companies.

Location of AECF Portfolio Companies We Worked With



Report Guide

AECF Portfolio Average: We calculated the average by equally weighting each projects' results.

Segmentation Analysis: We looked for differences in results by sub-region and gender. Where there are differences, we have called these out in the report.

Benchmarks: We have compared the portfolio results to our 60 Decibels Energy Benchmarks (wherever applicable). You can find out more here: 60 Decibels Energy Benchmark dashboard.

Metrics: The data presented on each page includes all data we have for these indicators. For the studies funded by other partners, not all indicators were included in all studies.

A quick guide to the main concepts we use in this report.

60dB Global Energy Benchmark

96

119

Companies:

Projects:

Respondents: 27,800+

Countries: 25

Company Product Types

- Solar Home System (SHS)
- Cookstove:
- Solar Water Pump (SWP)
- Biodigester
- Mini-grid
- Micro Mill
- E-mobility

List of Companies Covered In The Report

- Africa GreenTec
- Agsol
- BURN Manufacturing
- BioLite
- Deevabits
- EMICOM
- Easy Solar
- EcoPower
- Energy+

- Epsilon Energia
- FINCOOP SACCO
- Kazang
- LIB Solar
- Mobility for Africa
- Modify Electromechanical System Solutions
- Oolu Solar
- PEACE Microfinance

- SOGEPAL
- Sistema.bio
- Solar Panda
- Sunculture
- VITALITE
- Zambuko Trust
- Zonful
- Zuwa

Portfolio Performance Insights

Companies are providing products or services that most customers did not have access to before. 81% of customers are accessing products and services through AECF portfolio companies for the first time, in particular urban customers. 22 out of 28 portfolio companies have excellent First Access scores; above the 60 Global and Energy Benchmarks. 70% of customers could not easily find a good alternative to their product or service.

The average portfolio Net Promoter Score of 65 is very good. The average NPS across the AECF portfolio companies we worked with, is higher than the 60 Decibels Energy Benchmark (65 vs 50). However, customer satisfaction is highlight correlated with customer challenge rates and issue resolution.

45% of customers live below the \$3.20 per day poverty line. There is room to reach a higher proportion of low-income customers relative to the countries the companies are working in. The AECF portfolio's Inclusivity Ratio of 0.55 is lower than the 60dB Energy Benchmark of 0.77. Portfolio companies could explore ways of making their products or services more affordable to low-income customers in their respective markets.

Companies have contributed to improved quality of life for customers. Impact performance is strong across the AECF portfolio companies we

Impact performance is strong across the AECF portfolio companies we worked with, in particular for quality of life. 94% of customers say their energy product or service has improved their quality of life; for 63% the improvement is significant. Companies are generating similar impact despite having different offerings in diverse markets.

Nearly a third of customers have experienced a challenge using their product or service. 27% say this.

Customer challenges affect impact and satisfaction. The NPS for customers with unresolved challenges is significantly lower (39) than for those with resolved challenges (60) or those with no challenges (72). This highlights the importance of customer service and issue resolution for positive impact.

Lean Data Insights for AECF

Performance Snapshot: AECF Portfolio

The AECF portfolio companies we worked with outperform the 60dB Energy Benchmarks in 5 out of 7 metrics.

AECF Portfolio companies outperform the 60 Decibels Energy Benchmarks on the following metrics:

- First Access
- Female Reach
- Satisfaction (Net Promoter Score)
- · Ease of Use
- Quality of Life improvements

There is scope for improvement in reaching populations with no/few perceived access or options (Access to Alternatives) and lower-income households.

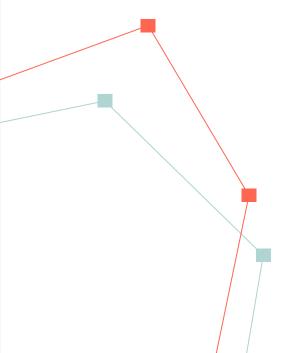
Legend

- > : Higher than 60dB Energy Benchmark
- : Lower than 60dB Energy Benchmark
- = : On par with 60dB Energy Benchmark

Metric	AECF Average		60dB Energy Benchmark		
First Access % accessing product for the first time	81%	>	71%		
Access to Alternatives % with no easy access to good alternatives	70%	<	80%		
Income Inclusivity the degree in which companies are serving low- income customers compared to the general population	0.55	<	0.77		
Female Reach % female respondents	38%	>	31%		
Net Promoter Score on a scale from -100 to 100	65	>	50		
Ease of Use % not experiencing challenges	73%	>	67%		
Quality of Life % 'very much improved' quality of life	63%	>	51%		

Customer Voices

We love hearing customer voices. Here are some that stood out.



Impact Stories

63% shared how the products and services of the AECF portfolio companies we worked with, had significantly improved their quality of life

"My quality of life has improved slightly because, before, we used to draw water with our hands to water the vegetable crops, but now thanks to the solar water pump our working time has considerably decreased and the income has increased." – Female, 71 years

"First, with this cookstove I can generate extra income outside my normal work. Secondly, we spend less money buying coal in my house. This helps us a lot." – Female, 43 years

"Now we have access to a reliable source of light which has enhanced our security at night." – Female, 35 years

"Since I bought the light, I have been able to have quality time with my friends especially at night because they're always bringing their gadgets for me to help them charge them." – Male, 42 years

"[The mini-grid connection] allows us to be informed at the same level as urban populations through televisions and our phones are also always charged so we no longer have to worry about being unreachable." – Female, 36 years

"Since I got this [product], I have been able to save more than before. This is due to reduced expenses on cooking fuel." – Male, Age not disclosed

Opinions On Portfolio Companies' Value Proposition

72% were Promoters and highly likely to recommend

"We are saving money as we used to buy candles for multiple rooms as well as pay to charge our phones. But now we are saving money for other things for the home." – Female, 41 years

The pump is easy to use on farms without damaging the seedlings. The most important is that it can be used without too many expenses." – Male, 46 years

"The lights last longer and are very bright in rural areas. The payment methods are very flexible." – Male, 33 years "I love how the [product] has reduced time in the kitchen as it cooks food relatively fast." – Female, 36 years

"Charging phones is easier and faster with good and stable voltage. I watch TV with my friends who also take the opportunity to charge their phones." – Male, 30 years

"The cookstove is sturdy and repayment costs are not exorbitant." – Female, 44 years

Customer Profile

- Demographics
- Poverty Reach
- First Access
- Access to Alternatives

"With the SHS, I can light up the whole house and easily charge my phone. I can also watch TV, and my children can play and do their schoolwork while I prepare dinner."

- Female, 48 years

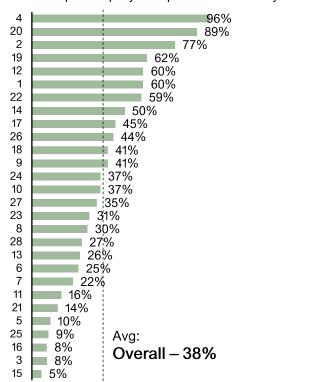


Demographics

38% of customers in the AECF portfolio companies we spoke to, are female and the average age is 44 years old.

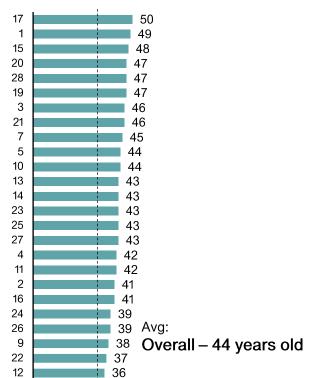
Gender

% Female per company. Companies listed on the y-axis



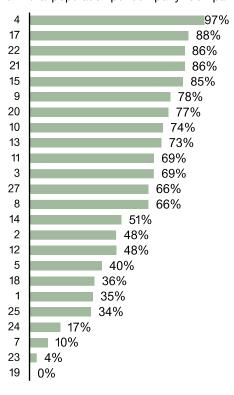
Age

Average age per company



Rural Population

% Rural population per company. Companies listed on the y-axis*

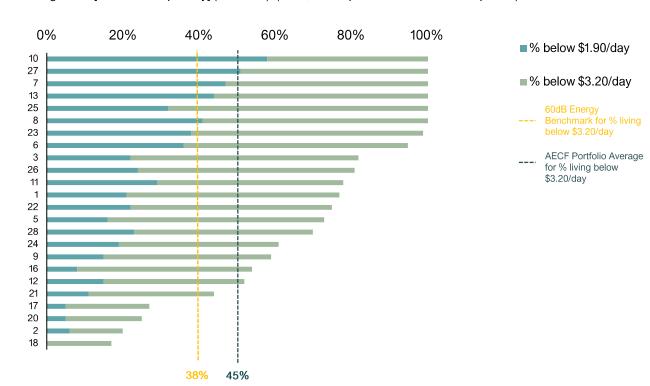


The majority of the companies we conducted Lean Data studies with in the AECF portfolio are reaching a higher proportion of customers living in poverty than the 60 Decibels Energy Benchmark (\$3.20/day). Companies 10 and 27 are serving the highest proportion of customers living under \$1.90/day.

38% of customers of the AECF portfolio companies we interviewed live below \$1.90/day and 45% below the \$3.20/day poverty lines.

Proportion of AECF Portfolio Customers Living Below Global Poverty Lines

% living below [\$1.90 / \$3.20 per day] (2011 PPP): (n = 6,295 respondents across 24 companies)



First Access

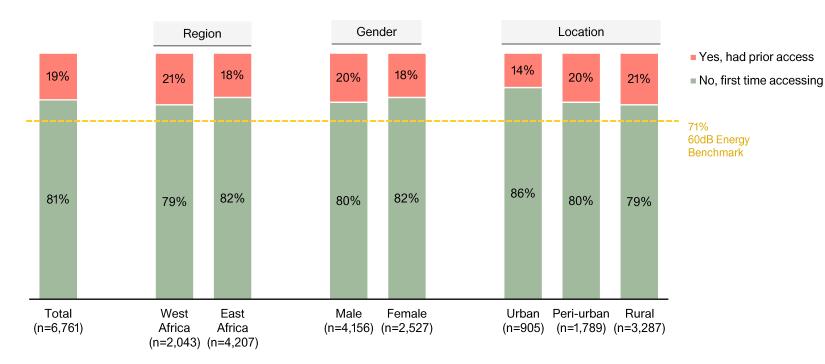
The First Access indicator provides us insight into the degree to which companies are reaching unserved populations.

There is little difference across region, gender, or location.

81% of customers did not have prior access to an energy product or service like they purchased from the AECF portfolio companies.

First Access by Region, Gender, and Location

Q: Before [company], did you have access to a [product/service] like [company] provides?



Access to Alternatives

Availability of Alternatives provides insight into the competitive landscape and the degree to which AECF portfolio companies are providing a scarce product or service.

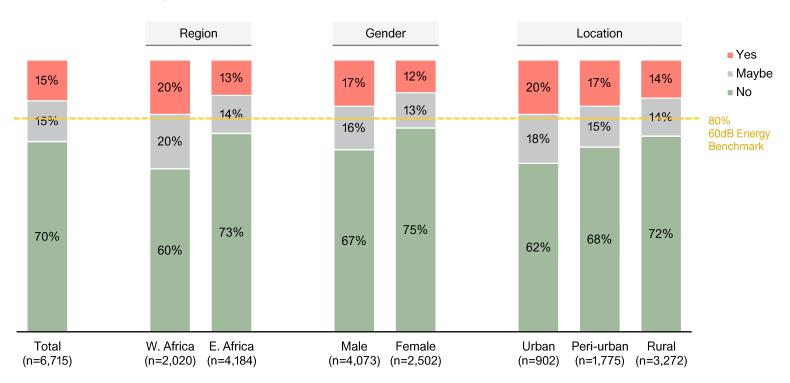
70% of customers we interviewed said they could not easily find a good alternative to their AECF company energy product/service, suggesting that these companies are filling a critical market gap and are important players in the market.

This effect is relatively more substantial in Eastern Africa, for women, and for those living in rural areas.

70% of customers of the AECF portfolio companies we worked with, say they could not easily find a good alternative to the products and services they now have.

Access to Alternatives by Region, Gender, and Location

Q: Could you easily find a good alternative to [company] [product/service]?



Prior Energy Sources: Solar Home System

Over three-quarters of SHS customers are not connected to the electricity grid. Flashlights were the most common lighting source prior to using the solar home system across the SHS portfolio.

The proportion of AECF's SHS customers connected to the electricity grid is 23%.

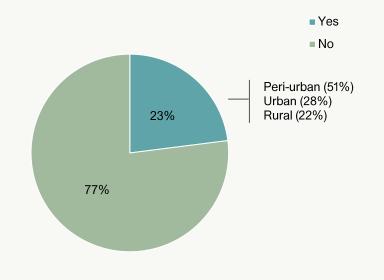
70% of AECF SHS Portfolio companies' customers have move up the energy staircase as a result of purchasing the solar home system.

*Energy staircase key:

Grid electricity
Generator
SHS
Solar lantern
Torch/flashlight
Kerosene lamp
Candle

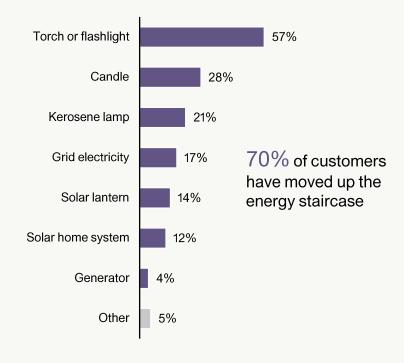
Connectivity to the Electricity Grid

Q: Is your [home/business] connected to the electricity grid? (n = 4,395)



Prior Lighting Methods

Q: What were you using for lighting before the [company] solar home system? Multiple responses (n = 4,297)

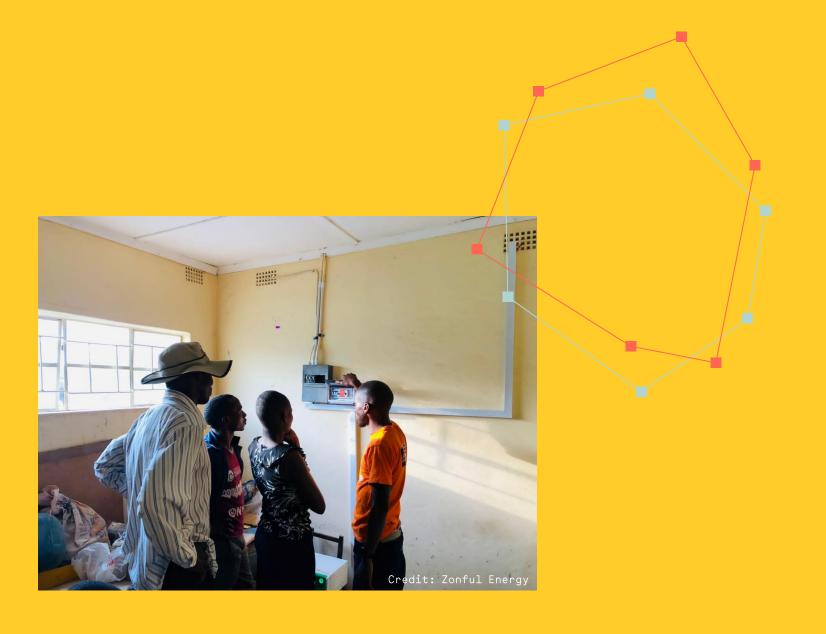


Impact Performance

- Quality of Life
- Security
- Safety in Home or Business
- Productive Use

"I used to suffer with the smoke of kerosene, and now with the SHS, I have high-intensity light to do my home activities. I am happy today."

- Female, 45 years



Quality of Life

Customers were asked to reflect on whether their quality of life has changed because of AECF portfolio companies' products and services. Overall, 94% of them say their life has improved.

Customers using it for productive use are more likely to say their quality of life has 'very much improved' (70%) compared to their counterparts(65%).

Customers residing in rural areas (68%) are more likely to report significant improvements in quality of life compared to those in urban (60%) and peri-urban areas (59%).

For reference, these are the relevant 60db Energy Benchmarks:

(% reporting 'very much improved')

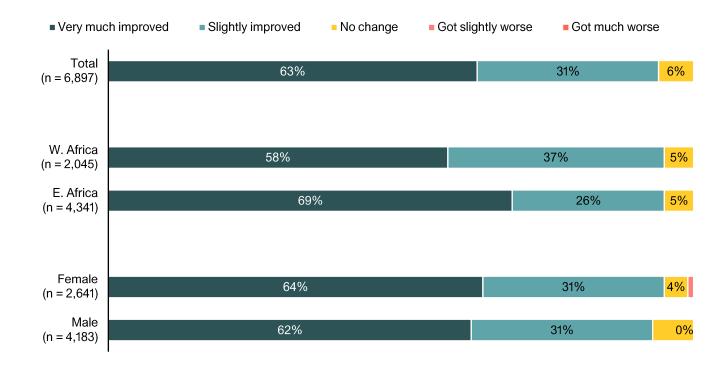
• Global: 49% (92 companies)

Africa: 49% (72 companies)

63% of AECF portfolio company customers we interviewed say their quality of life has significantly improved because of the company product or service. This is higher than the 60 Decibels Energy Benchmark of 49%.

Quality of Life by Region and Gender

Q: Has your quality of life changed because of [company] [product/service]?

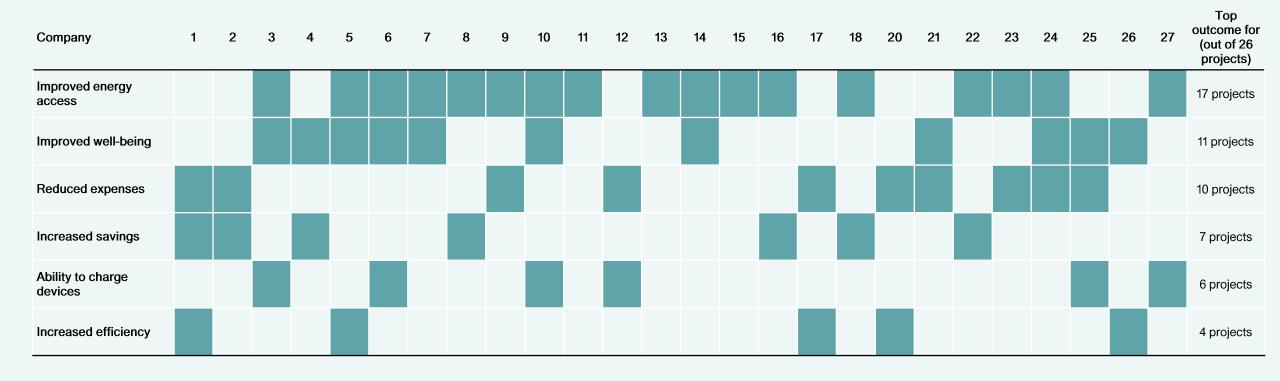


Quality of Life: Top Outcomes

Improved energy access, reduced expenses, and increased savings were the most common outcomes shared by customers who say their quality of life has improved.

Quality of Life Top Outcomes Experienced by 94% Who Report Improvements

Q: How has your quality of life improved? Open-ended, coded by 60 Decibels. (n = 6,474 across 26 projects)

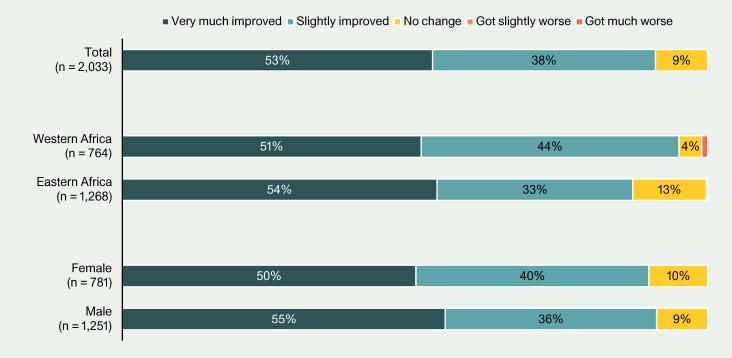


The following trends stood out to us:

- Age: Customers who are aged 50+ years old are more likely to mention improvements in safety (93%) than younger customers aged 30-49 years (87%) and 18-29 years (85%).
- Location: Customers who live in urban areas are more likely to report improvements in safety (95%) compared to those who live in periurban (88%) and urban areas (86%).

Asset Security by Region and Gender

Q: Has how secure you feel about the assets in your home or business changed since having the [product / service]? Has it: (n = 2,033 across 8 companies)

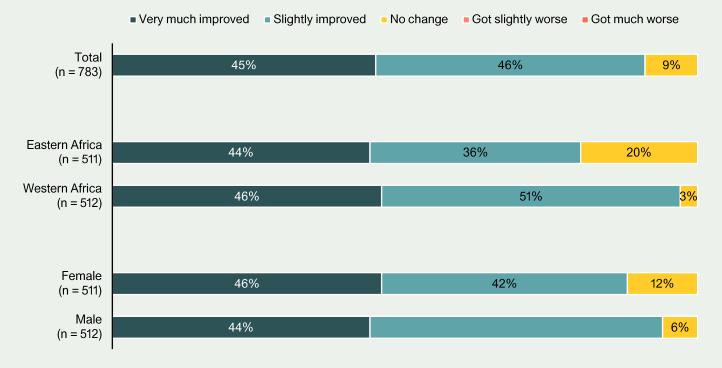


9 in 10 customers say that how safe they feel at home or at their business has improved since having the AECF portfolio company's product/service.

Safety in Home or Business by Region and Gender

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Q: Has how safe you feel in your home or business changed since having the [product]? Has it: (n = 783 respondents across 4 companies)



Productive Use

20% of customers use their energy product/service for income-generating activities – either in their business or at home.

83% of customers use their energy product or service only at home.

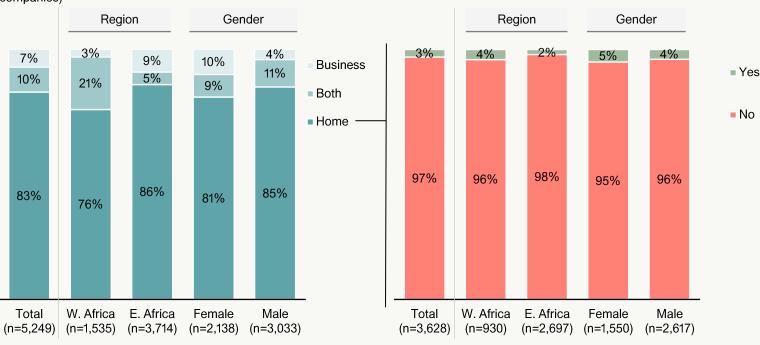
We found that productive use is the highest in urban areas (32%) compared to rural areas (22%) and peri-urban areas (18%).



Q: Are you using your [company] [product/service] in your home and/or your business? (n = 5,249 across 20 companies)

Productive Use

Q: Do you use the [company] [product/service] for incomegenerating activities?



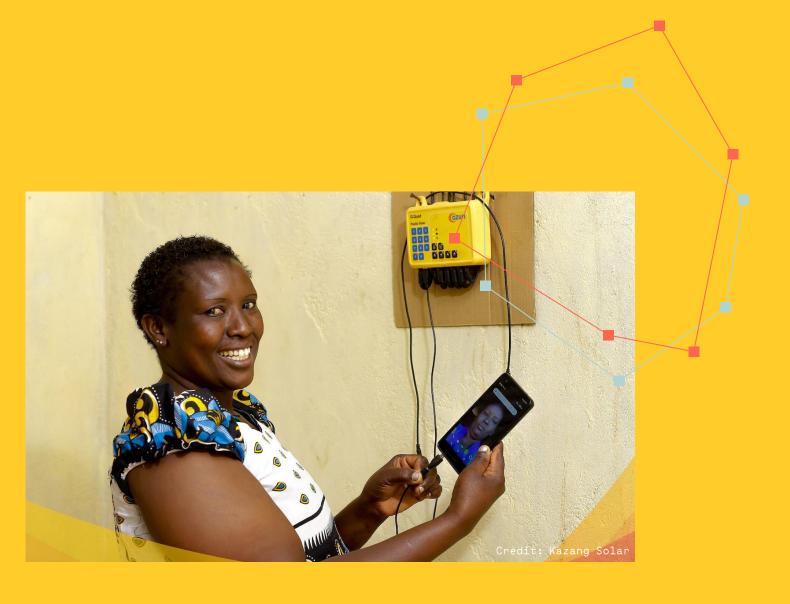
Note: To calculate all those using it for productive use, we considered % using at business (7%), for both (10%), and all those who use it at home for income-generation purposes (3% of 83%).

Customer Experience

- Customer Satisfaction (Net Promoter Score®)
- Challenge Rate
- Value for Money
- Closing Thoughts

"It is the best way to get light without incurring expenses. It is much better than the kerosene lamp that has an effect on our eyes and health."

- Male, 38 years



Impact

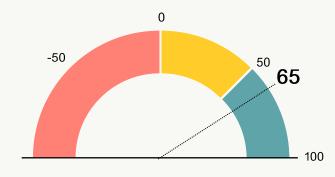
Companies in the AECF portfolio we worked with, have an average Net Promoter Score (NPS) of 65 which is very good and higher than relevant 60 Decibels Benchmarks.

The Net Promoter Score® is a gauge of customer satisfaction and loyalty. Anything above 50 is considered very good. A negative score is considered poor.

Over the next few pages, we will be looking at Net Promoter Score by Segments as well as drivers for NPS.

Net Promoter Score® (NPS)

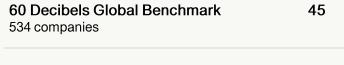
Q: On a scale from 0 to 10, How likely are you to recommend the [company] [product/service] to a friend or family member where 0 is not at all likely and 10 is extremely likely? (n = 7,149)

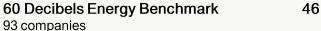




NPS Benchmarks







Net Promoter Score by Segments

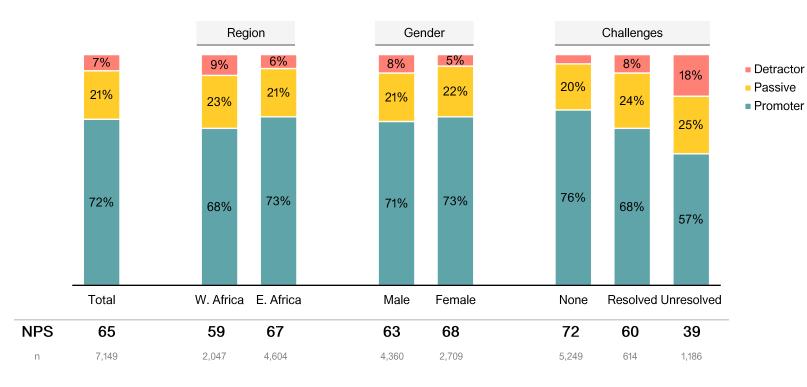
Challenges are a major driver of the NPS. NPS is higher for customers facing no challenges (72) compared to those with challenges (44). Of those facing challenges, NPS is higher for customers with resolved challenges (60), compared to those with unresolved challenges (39).

NPS is also higher for those residing in rural areas (67) compared to those in peri-urban (66) and urban areas (62). Similarly, NPS is higher for those using it for productive use (70) compared to those who do not currently use it for any income-generation activities (64).

Challenge rates and issue resolution influence the Net Promoter Score.

Net Promoter Score by Region, Gender, and Challenge Resolution

Q: On a scale of 0 to 10, how likely are you to recommend the [company] [product] to a friend or family member, where 0 is least likely and 10 is most likely? (n = 7,149)

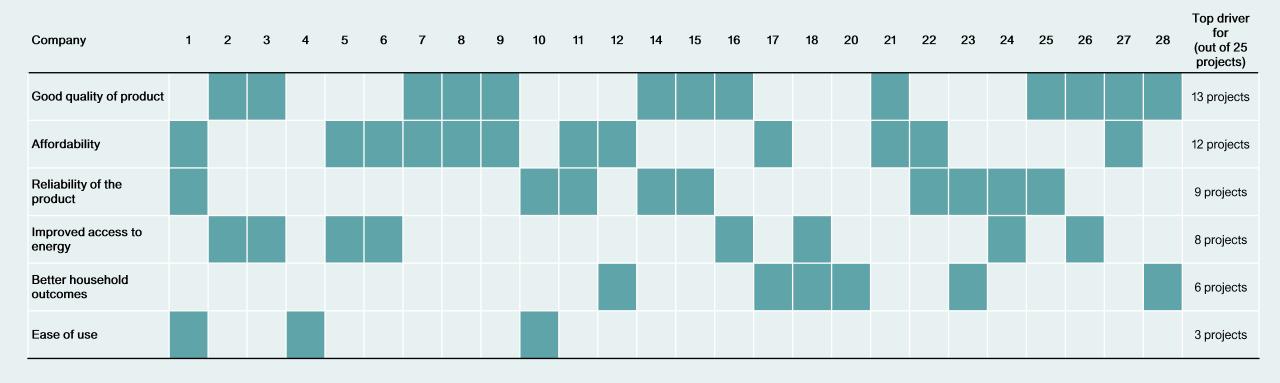


Net Promoter Score: Drivers

We coded customers open-ended responses to group their top value drivers. The most common are that the product is reliable, affordable, and of good quality.

Most Common Drivers for 70% of Customers Who are Promoters

Q: What specifically about [company [product/service] would cause you to recommend it to a friend or family member? (n = 4,993 across 25 projects). Open-ended, coded by 60 Decibels.



Challenges Experienced

To put this data into context: a lower challenge rate signals better performance.

Customers using the product or service for productive use (37%) are more likely to report challenges than those who do not use it for any income-generating activities.

We can see the different types of challenges reported on the next page.

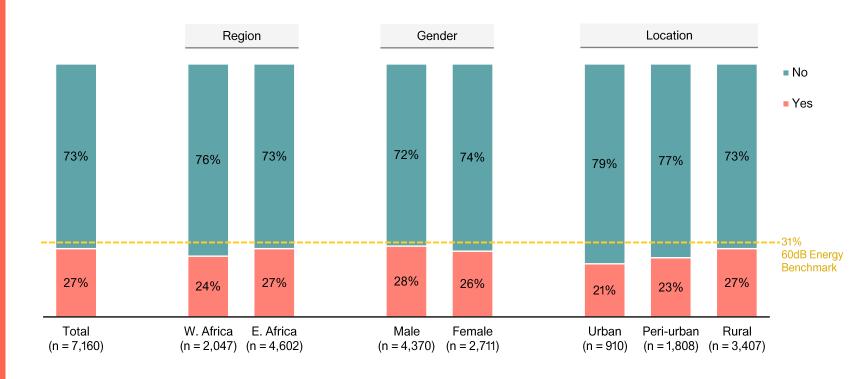
For reference, these are the relevant 60dB Energy Benchmarks:

31% Global: (89 companies)

 Africa: 31% (73 companies) Across the AECF portfolio companies we worked with, 27% of customers have faced a challenge with a product or service.

Customers Reporting Challenges by Region, Gender, and Location

Q: Have you experienced any challenges with using [company] [product]?

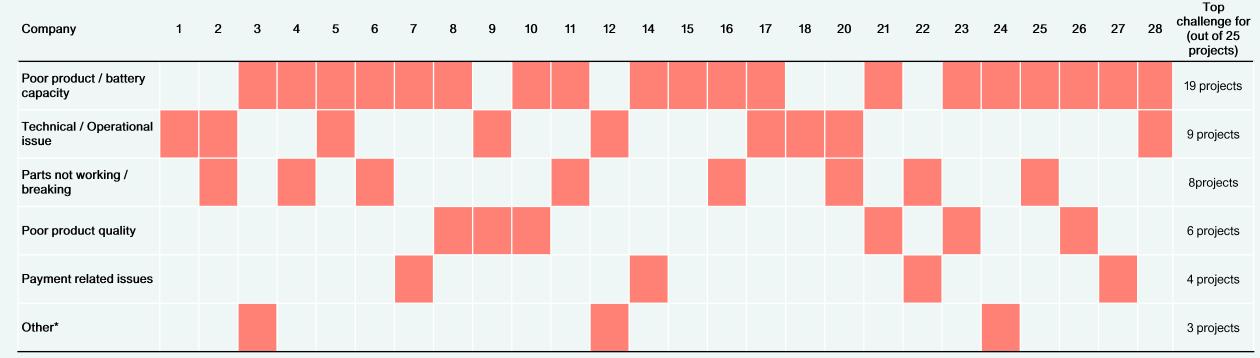


Challenge Experience: Top Issues

We coded customers open-ended responses to group the most common challenges mentioned. These were around product capacity, parts not working, and operational issues with the product.

Most Common Issues for 27% of Customers Experiencing Challenges

Q: Please explain the challenge you have experienced. (n = 1,959 across 25 projects). Open-ended, coded by 60 Decibels.



^{**}Other' includes instances of 'poor customer service', 'poor repair service', and other factors beyond the product.

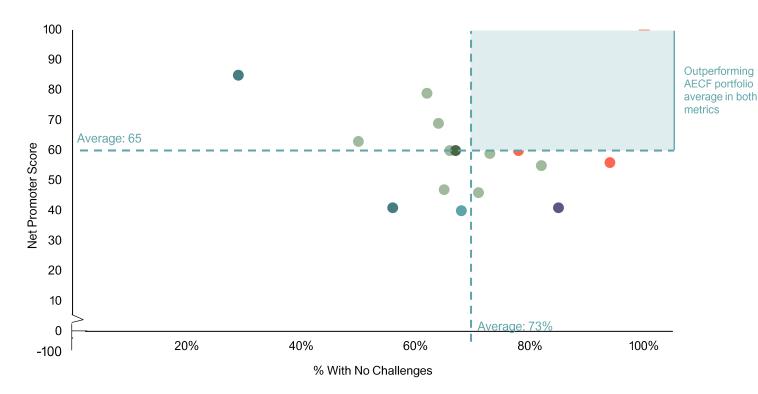
Customer Satisfaction & Challenge Experience

In order to improve customer satisfaction, AECF portfolio companies should aim to reduce and resolved customer challenges. This will have positive affect satisfaction and impact; if a customer cannot use their product/service to full effect then they cannot realise the full benefits or it and are less likely to recommend it to friends/family.

Customer satisfaction is affected by the challenge rate. Companies with the highest NPS have the largest proportion of customers who have not experienced challenges.

Net Promoter Score vs. Ease of Use

Relationship between customer satisfaction and challenge rate.



them.

We use the value for money question to understand whether customers feel the product or service they have is a

good use of the money they spend on

Customers residing in rural areas (45%) and peri-urban areas (42%) are more likely to rate the product / service to be of 'very good' value for money compared to those in urban areas (38%).

We did not find any statistically significant different in perceptions of value for money by productive use.

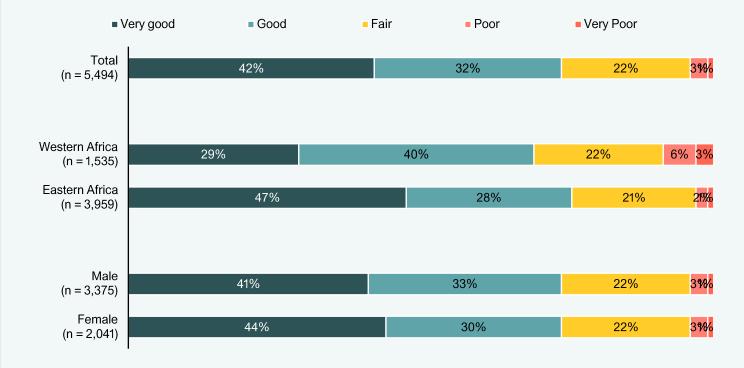
Value for money and NPS are closely linked. A larger share of Promoters rate the product or service as 'very good' and 'good' value for money (82%), compared to Passives (62%) and Detractors (25%).

Nearly three-quarters of customers rate the product or service as good value for money. Customers in Eastern Africa give a higher rating than those in Western Africa.

Value for Money

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Q: How do you rate the value for money of [company] [product/service]? (n = 5,494 across 20 companies)

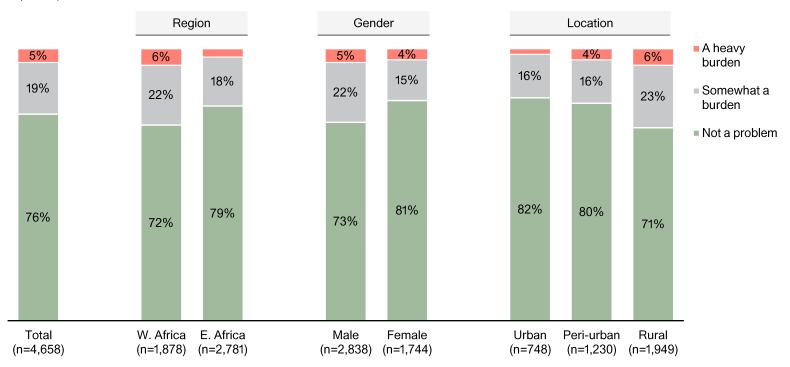


This effect is relatively more substantial in Western Africa and for those living in rural areas.

An important 5% of customers of the AECF portfolio companies we worked with, consider the repayments for their products / services to be a heavy burden. This is lower than the 60 Decibels Energy Benchmark of 8%.

Over-Indebtedness by Region, Gender, and Location

Q: Thinking about the payments for the [product/service], are they a) a heavy burden, b) somewhat a burden, c) not a problem?



Appendix

- 60 Decibels Energy Benchmark
- Calculations & Definitions

"It is the best way to get light without incurring expenses. It is much better than the kerosene lamp that has an effect on our eyes and health."

- Male, 38 years



The 60dB Energy Benchmark

The 60 Decibels Energy Benchmark is made up of the average performance of the energy company projects conducted in the past 3 years (2020 – 2023). This includes 96 off-grid energy companies and 119 projects.

We have completed Lean Data projects for some companies in multiple countries, for multiple services, or multiple timeframes; providing deeper learning over time or cross-geography.

Energy companies: mini-grid providers, solar home system, solar lantern, off-grid appliances, improved cooking solutions.

Companies we've worked with

	Acacia Innovations Africa GreenTec Agsol Altech ATEC Biodigesters Azuri BBOXX Bidhaa Sasa BioLite BioMassters Bonergie BURN Carbon Trust Circle Gas Consumer's Choice d.light Deevabits Easy Solar Emerging Cooking Solutions (Supamoto) EMICOM Sarl ENERGIA Energy+ ENGIE		Fenix International Zambia Ltd FINCOOP SACCO Frontier Markets Greenlight Planet GVE Group Harness Energy Husk Power Systems Infra Capital Myanmar International Lifeline Fund Jaza Jumeme Kazang Solar KOKO Networks Koolboks LIB Solar Mega Global Green Mlinda Charitable Mobile Power Mobility for Africa Mobisol MREF Mwangaza Light		Nova Lumos OMC Power Ongeza Oolu Oolu Solar OPES Solutions Otago Parami Energy Pawame PEG Philippines Smart Solar Pilipinas Shell Foundation Inc. (PSFI) Pollinate Energy PowerGen Powerhive Powerstove Pro Engineering Qotto	•	Sistema.bio SOGEPAL Limitada SP Eco Fuel Standard Microgrid SunColombia SunnyMoney Talent and Technology Tara Urja Techno-Hill Trend Solar Umeme Unnamed record upOwa Vitalite Vitalite Group Vitalite Malawi WANA Energy Solutions Winock Solar Zambuko Trust ZOLA Electric Zonful Enterprises Zuwa
					•		
•	ENGIE ENVenture	•	Mwezi Limited	•	Shell		
•	Equatorial Power	•	NAL Offgrid	•	Simusolar		
•	Equatorial Fower	•	NAL Oligila	•	Simusoiai		

Calculations & Definitions

For those who like to geek out, here's a summary of some of the calculations we used in this deck.

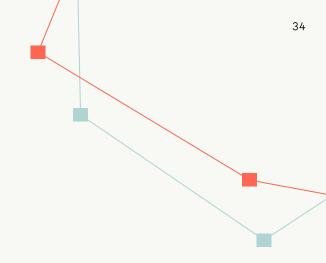
Metric	Calculation			
Net Promoter Score®	The Net Promoter Score is a common gauge of customer loyalty. It is measured through asking customers to rate their likelihood to recommend your service to a friend on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is least likely and 10 is most likely. The NPS is the % of customers rating 9 or 10 out of 10 ('Promoters') minus the % of customers rating 0 to 6 out of 10 ('Detractors'). Those rating 7 or 8 are considered 'Passives'.			
Inclusivity Ratio	The Inclusivity Ratio is a metric developed by 60 Decibels to estimate the degree to which an enterprise is reaching less well-off customers. It is calculated by taking the average of Company % / National %, at the \$1.90, \$3.20 & \$5.50 lines for low-middle income countries, or at the \$3.20, \$5.50 and \$11 lines for middle income countries. The formula is: $\sum_{x=1}^{3} \frac{([Company]\ Poverty\ Line\ \$x)}{(Country\ Poverty\ Line\ \$x)} / 3$			
Customer Effort Score	How easy do you make it for your customers to resolve their issues? This measure captures the aftersales care and customer service. Customers who have experienced a challenge are asked to what extent they agree with the statement: Do you agree or disagree with statement: Overall, [Company] made it easy for me to handle my issue: disagree (1), somewhat disagree (2), neither agree or disagree (3), somewhat agree (4), agree (5). The CES is the average score between 1 and 5. It is an important driver of uptake, adoption, and referrals, as well as of impact.			

With Us!

Thank You For Working

Lean Data Insights for AECF

Let's do it again sometime.



About 60 Decibels

60 Decibels makes it easy to listen to the people who matter most. 60 Decibels is an impact measurement company that helps organisations around the world better understand their customers, suppliers, and beneficiaries. Its proprietary approach, Lean Data, brings customer-centricity, speed and responsiveness to impact measurement.

60 Decibels has a network of 830+ trained Lean Data researchers in 70+ countries who speak directly to customers to understand their lived experience. By combining voice, SMS, and other technologies to collect data remotely with proprietary survey tools, 60 Decibels helps customers listen more effectively and benchmark their social performance against their peers.

60 Decibels has offices in London, Nairobi, New York, and Bengaluru. To learn more, visit 60decibels.com.

We are proud to be a Climate Positive company. (

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This	service	allows	us to	charge	our	phones.	
I can	have my	business	open	for	longer	hours.	
Our	life has	improved	because	my	children	can study under	the light.

I used to use my phone to

- > see
- > at
- > night

but now I have
electricity every night.

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