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Council of European Energy Regulators

CEER hearing on
Draft Advice on Regulating the Quality of Distribution Services

Fostering energy markets, empowering **consumers**.

Customer and Retail Markets WG
Brussels, 28 April 2014

Main objectives

- **CEER Draft Advice on regulating the quality of distribution services. Focus on connection, disconnection and maintenance.**
  - From a customer perspective, connections, maintenance and disconnections are very relevant processes, as in some cases, they are the customers' first interaction with the energy market.
  - If these processes are well designed and well-functioning, the customer can engage in the energy market in a positive way.
  - The document focuses on the service quality levels provided for the connection of customers, particularly in relation to the *duration of the process* (time limits) and the *management of the relationship with the customer*.
  - The advice covers electricity and gas DSO customer services, also including microgeneration.

Draft Advice on regulating the quality of distribution services.

11 service areas	• New connection to the grid • Connection of a new customer to the network • Activation of energy supply • Disconnection of energy supply, after customer request • Warning mechanisms before disconnection due to non-payment • Reactivation of energy supply after disconnection due to non-payment • Planned energy interruptions • Information during un-planned energy interruption • Information on services and rights regarding connection and disconnection • Customer enquiries concerning connection and disconnection • Safety and emergency measures
3 energy sectors	The advices are divided into electricity (E), micro generation units (MG) and gas (G) in order to reflect possible differences between the different sectors

Planning

- **CEER Draft Advice on regulating the quality of distribution services. Focus on connection, disconnection and maintenance.**
  - Draft version for public consultation – December 2013
  - Public consultation – From 15th December 2013 to 31th January 2014
  - **Public hearing – 28th April 2014**

Next steps

  - Internal drafting: May - June 2014
  - Planned CEER approval – July 2014

Number of respondents to the public consultation

Country of origin	Number of respondents
Germany	10
Ireland	4
Spain	4
France	4
Denmark	3
Portugal	3
United Kingdom	3
Austria	2
Belgium	2
Poland	2

Country of origin	Number of respondents
Italy	2
E U	1
Netherland	1
Finland	1
Estonia	1
Romania	1
Hungary	1
Dominican Rep	1
Iran	1
TOTAL	**47**

Type of respondents to the public consultation

Type of respondent	Number of responses
DSOs	21
Energy Supply Companies	8
Industry Associations	7
Consumer's Associations	5
Authorities	3
Consultancy Firms	3
TOTAL	**47**

CEER hearing on Regulating the Quality of Distribution Services

SESSION 1: Focus on connections

Draft recommendations 1-6

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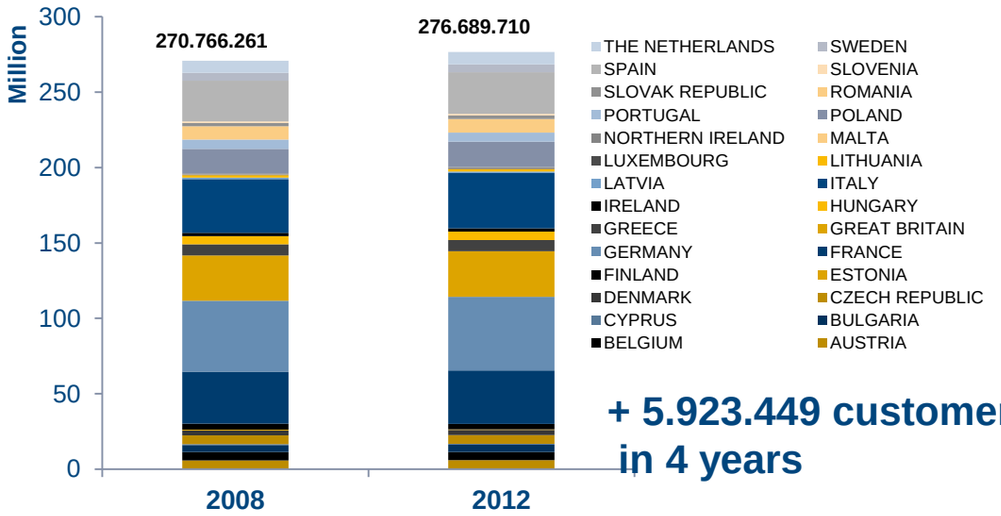
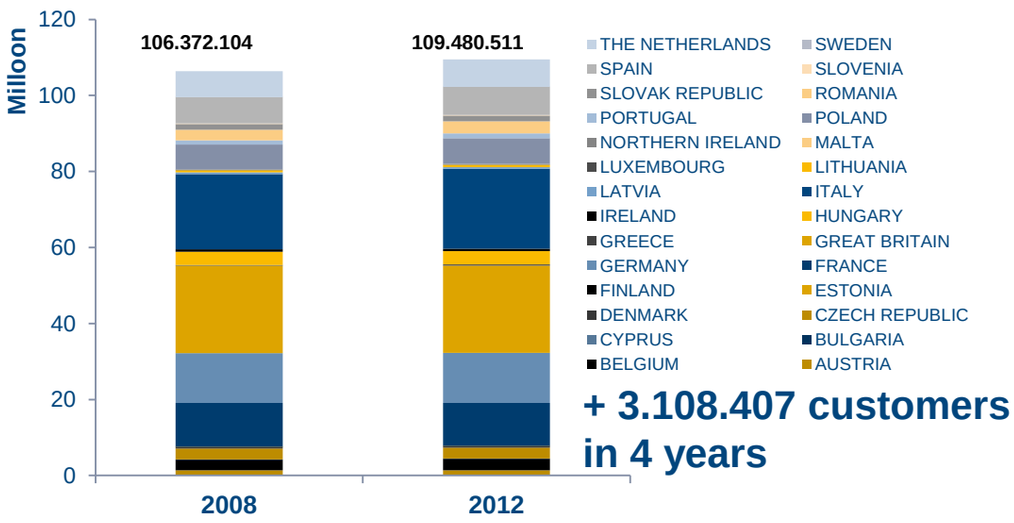
The connection process is very important for European energy customers

276 Million electricity customers



+ 5.923.449 customers in 4 years

110 Million gas customers



+ 3.108.407 customers in 4 years

- In the last 4 years, DSOs have connected about **9 million new customers** to the gas and electricity grids in Europe
  - 5,9 Millions in electricity
  - 3,1 Millions in gas
  - These numbers reflect only the net growth

- Taking into account **consumers moving in / moving out**, the total number of connections and disconnections is much higher

Service quality levels for connections

New Connections (with major works)

- Connecting new houses to the grid may require several visits to conduct works at the customer's premises, works in the street and in some cases, administrative authorization.
- The time taken and cost to complete a new network connection can vary a lot depending on the physical situation of the new connection point.

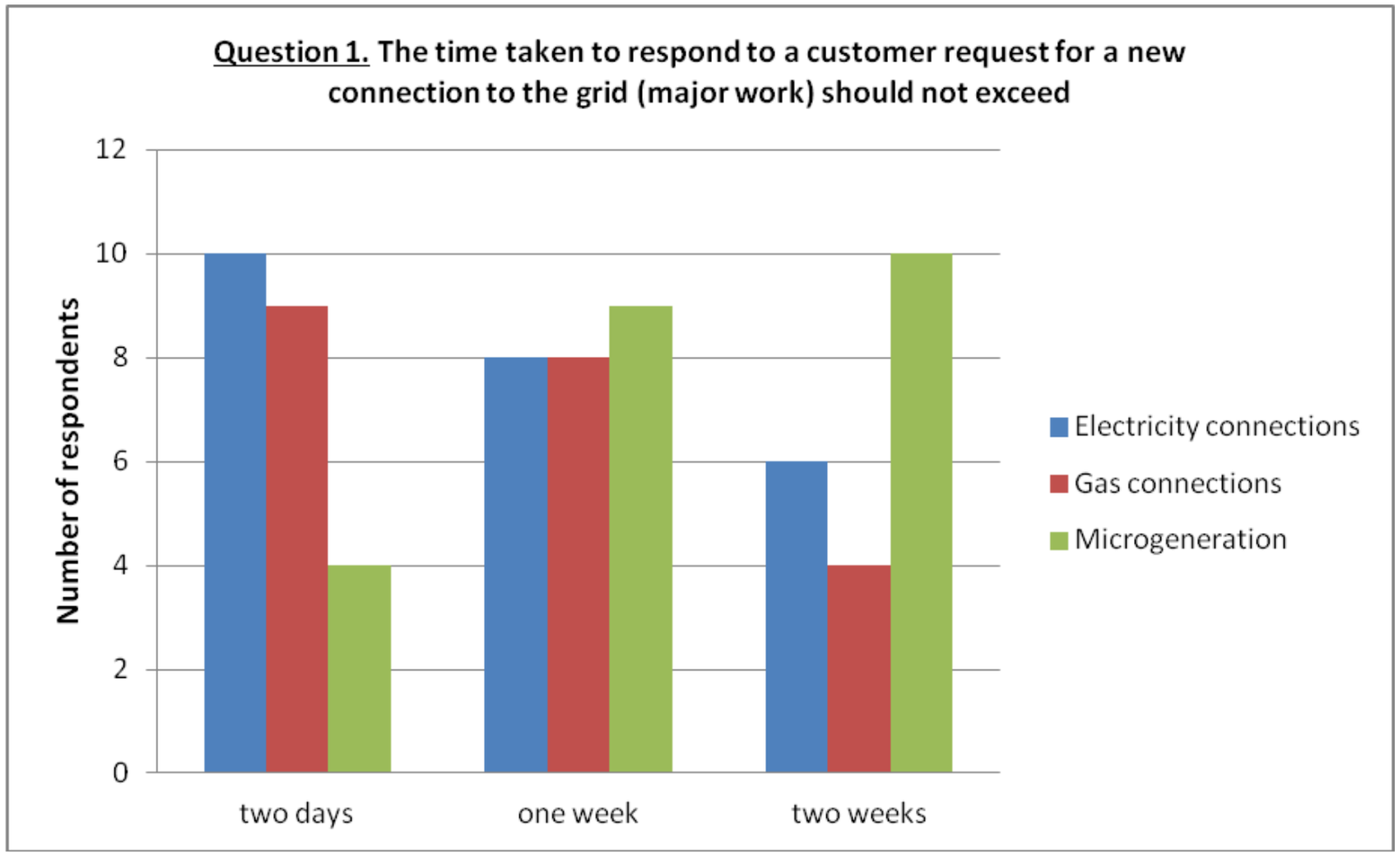
Connections with minor works

- A connection that requires **no more than** one or two visits to conduct works at the customer's premises.
- The median time taken to connect an electricity customer in Europe is 11 days, with a range between 2 days and 18 weeks. [Ref CEER 5th Benchmarking report on Quality of Electricity supply]

Block 1: Connections with major work
Recommendation 1: time response to customer request

Time taken to respond to a customer request for a new connection to the grid (major work) should not exceed:

- ☐ two days
- ☐ one week
- ☐ two weeks
- ☐ other time period



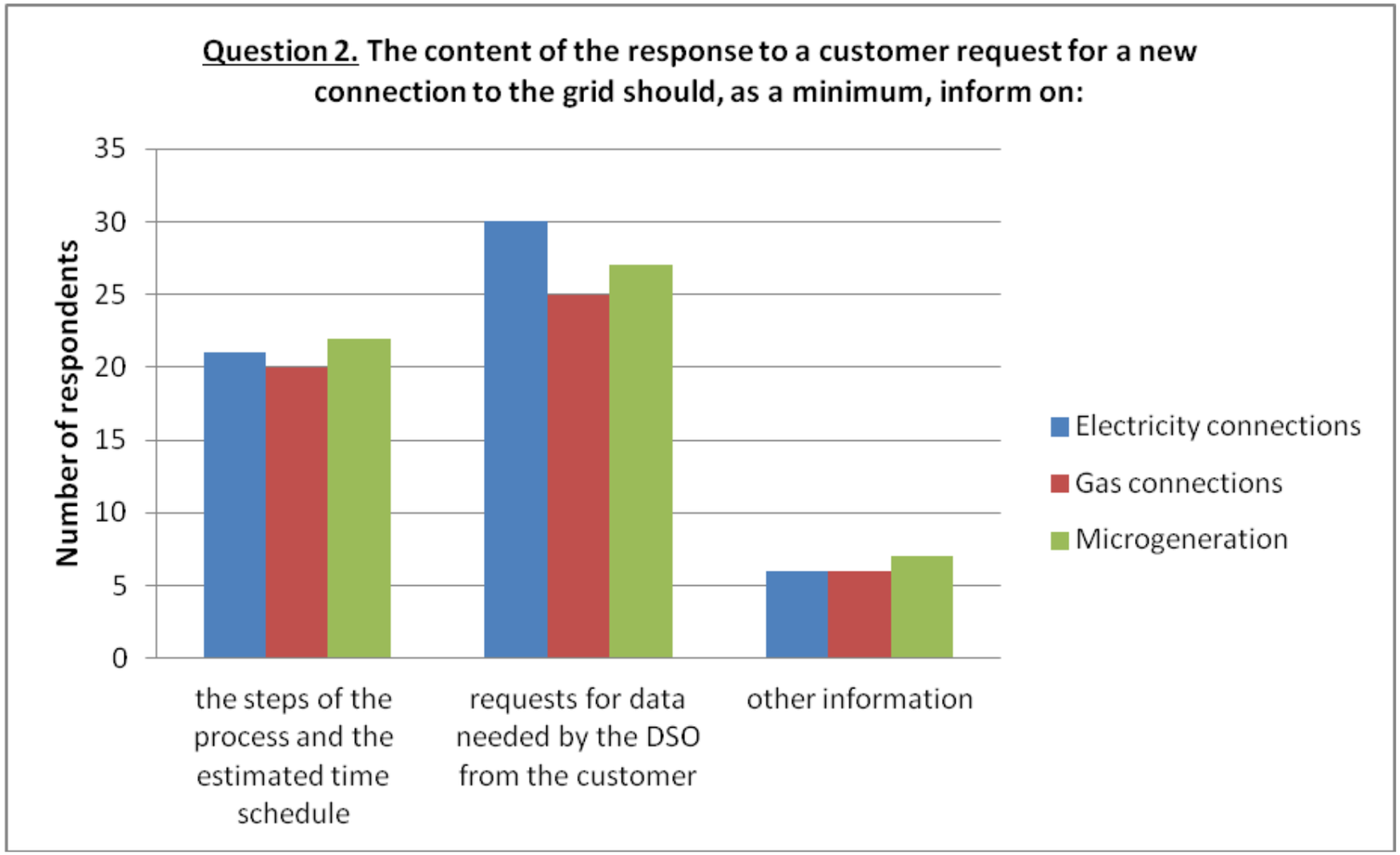
Selected comments by respondents to the public consultation :

- Terms are defined in the code by the regulator
- The time needed depends significantly on the content of the response (i.e. when the answers include a budget estimate)

Block 1: Connections with major work
Recommendation 2: content of the response

The content of the response to a customer request for a new connection to the grid should, as a minimum, inform on:

- ☐ the steps of the process and the estimated time schedule
- ☐ requests for data needed by the DSO from the customer
- ☐ other information



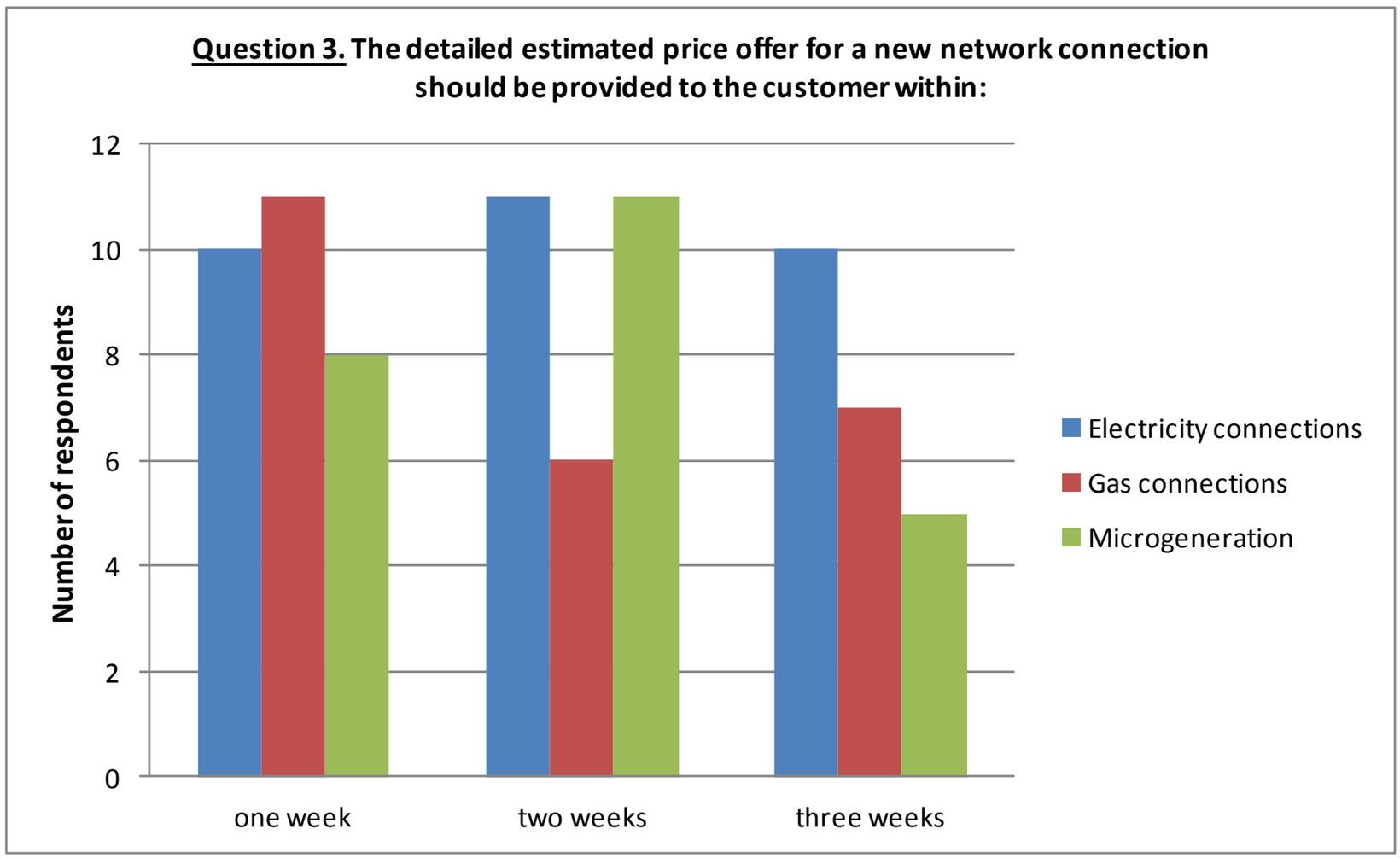
Selected comments by respondents to the public consultation:

- The request for data should include the customer's contact information

Block 1: Connections with major work
Recommendation 3: time for providing the price offer

The detailed estimated price offer for a new network connection should be provided to the customer within:

- ☐ one week
- ☐ two weeks
- ☐ three weeks
- ☐ other time period



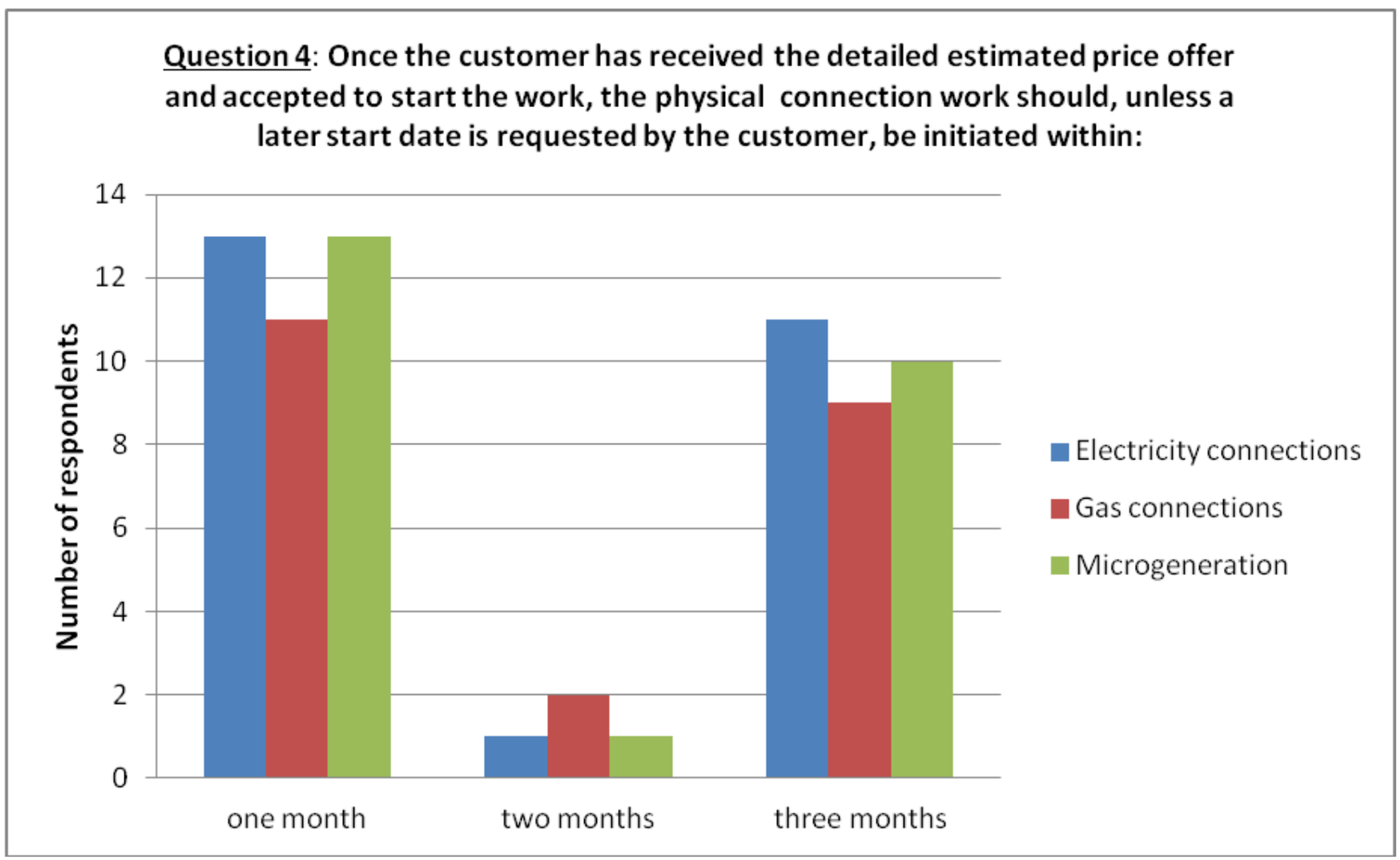
Selected comments by respondents to the public consultation:

- The time to provide cost estimations for network connection can vary according to the complexity of the work to carry out

Block 1: Connections with major work
Recommendation 4: time for initiating the connection

Once the customer has received the detailed estimated price offer and accepted to start the work, the physical connection work should, unless a later start date is requested by the customer, be initiated within:

- ☐ one month
- ☐ two months
- ☐ three months
- ☐ other time period



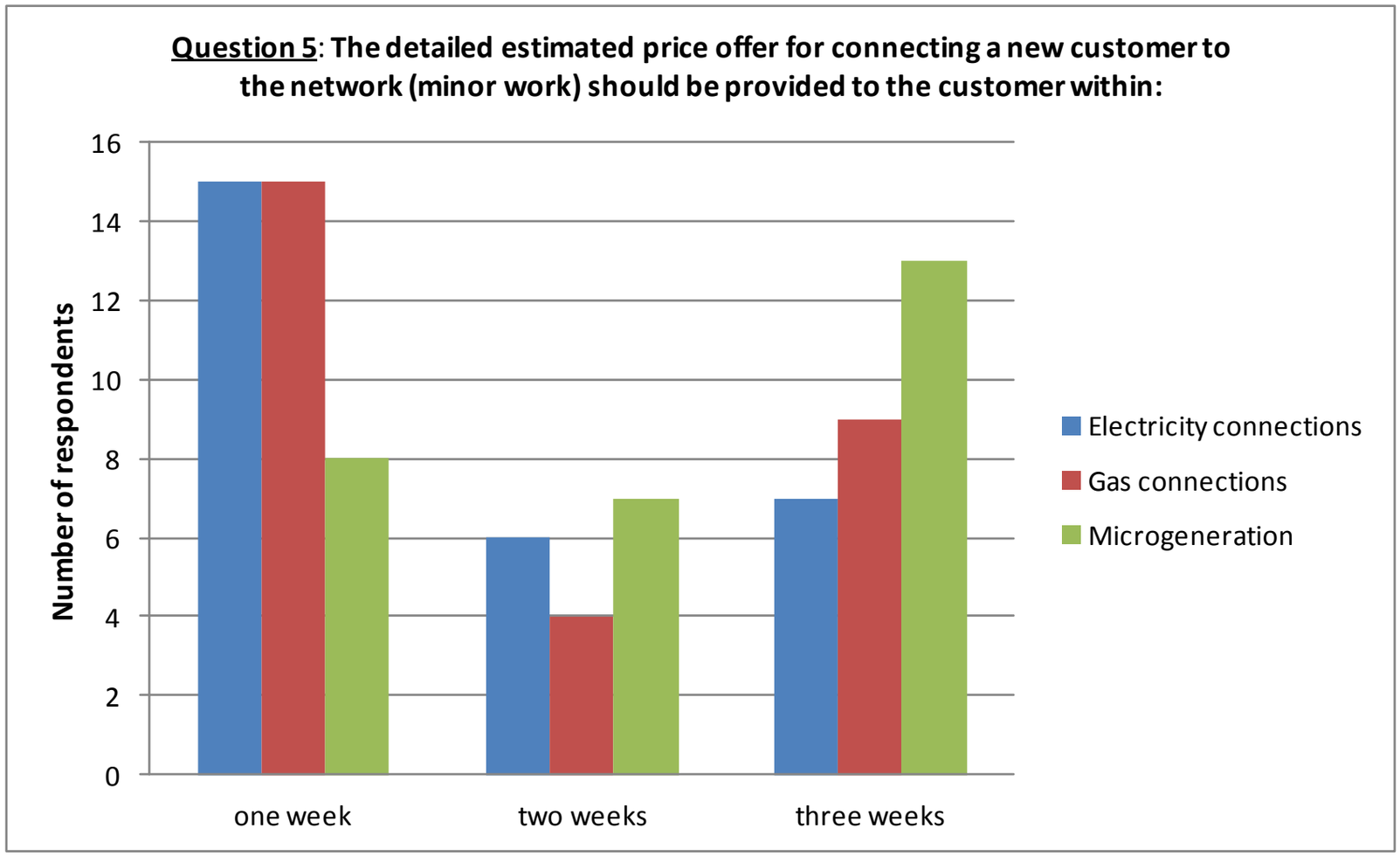
Selected comments by respondents to the public consultation:

- Time needed for a new connection should take into account the specific situation and other limiting factors (administrative authorization, frozen ground, snow,…)

Block 1: Connections with minor work
Recommendation 5: time for providing the price offer

The detailed estimated price offer for connecting a new customer to the network (minor work) should be provided to the customer within:

- ☐ one week
- ☐ two weeks
- ☐ three weeks
- ☐ other time period



Selected comments by respondents to the public consultation:

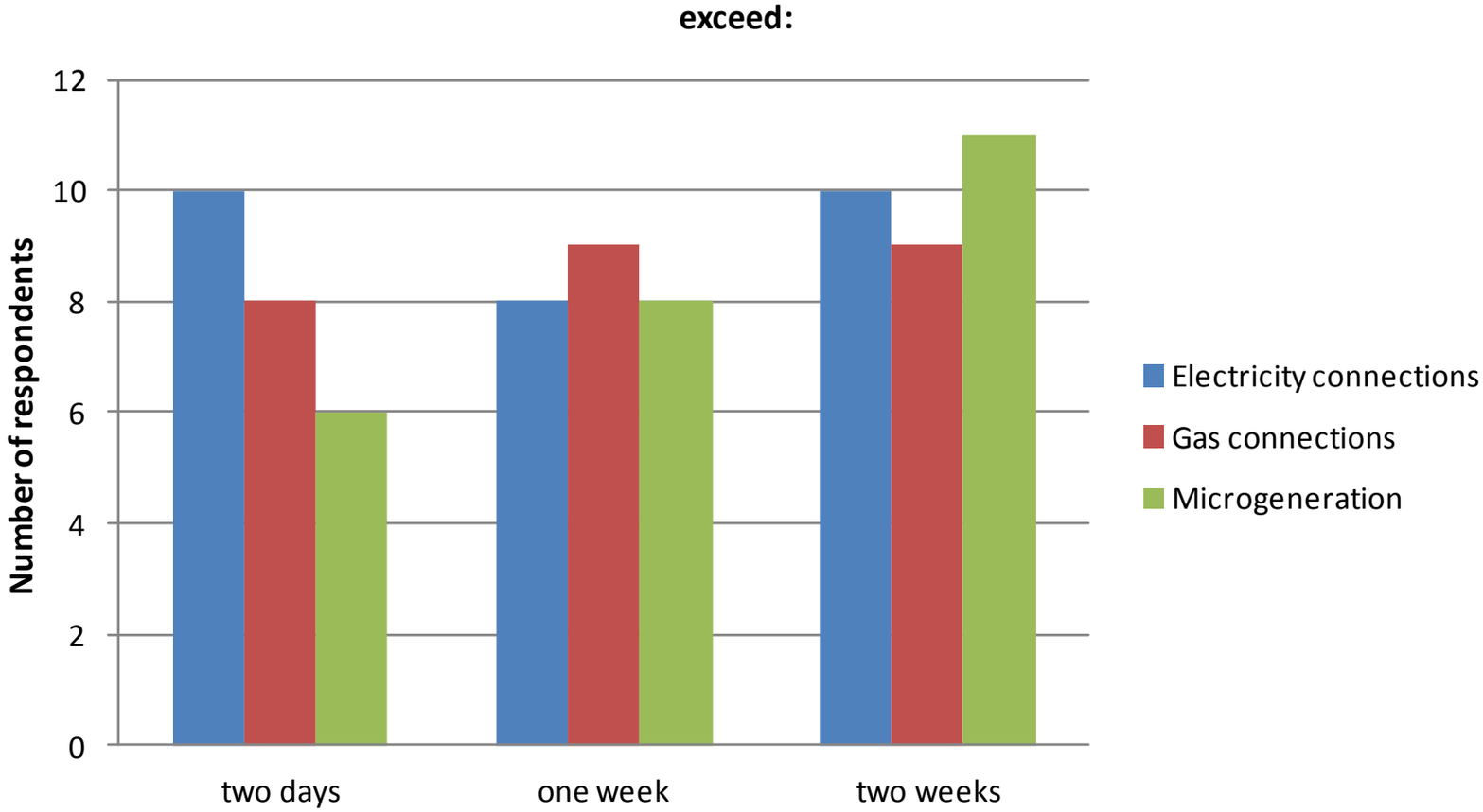
- Several DSOs have standard prices available on their websites

Block 1: Connections with minor work
Recommendation 6: time for connection

The time taken to connect a new customer to the network (minor work) should, unless a longer time period is requested by the customer, not exceed:

- ☐ two days
- ☐ one week
- ☐ two weeks
- ☐ other time period

Question 6: **The time taken to connect a new customer to the network (minor work) should, unless a longer time period is requested by the customer, not exceed:**



Selected comments by respondents to the public consultation:

- For reactivation of an inactive connection to the gas grid, the installation of a new meter on the customer's premises is necessary. And the in-house-installation has to be set into operation by an approved installation company on behalf of the customer. To ensure efficient workflows the DSO has to plan resource well, e.g. prepare service schedule for technical staff.
  In general the time taken to find an appointment with the customer should not exceed 5 working days after the acceptance of the detailed estimated price offer by the customer

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SESSION 2:

Focus on activation of supply, disconnection, warning mechanisms

Draft recommendations 7-9

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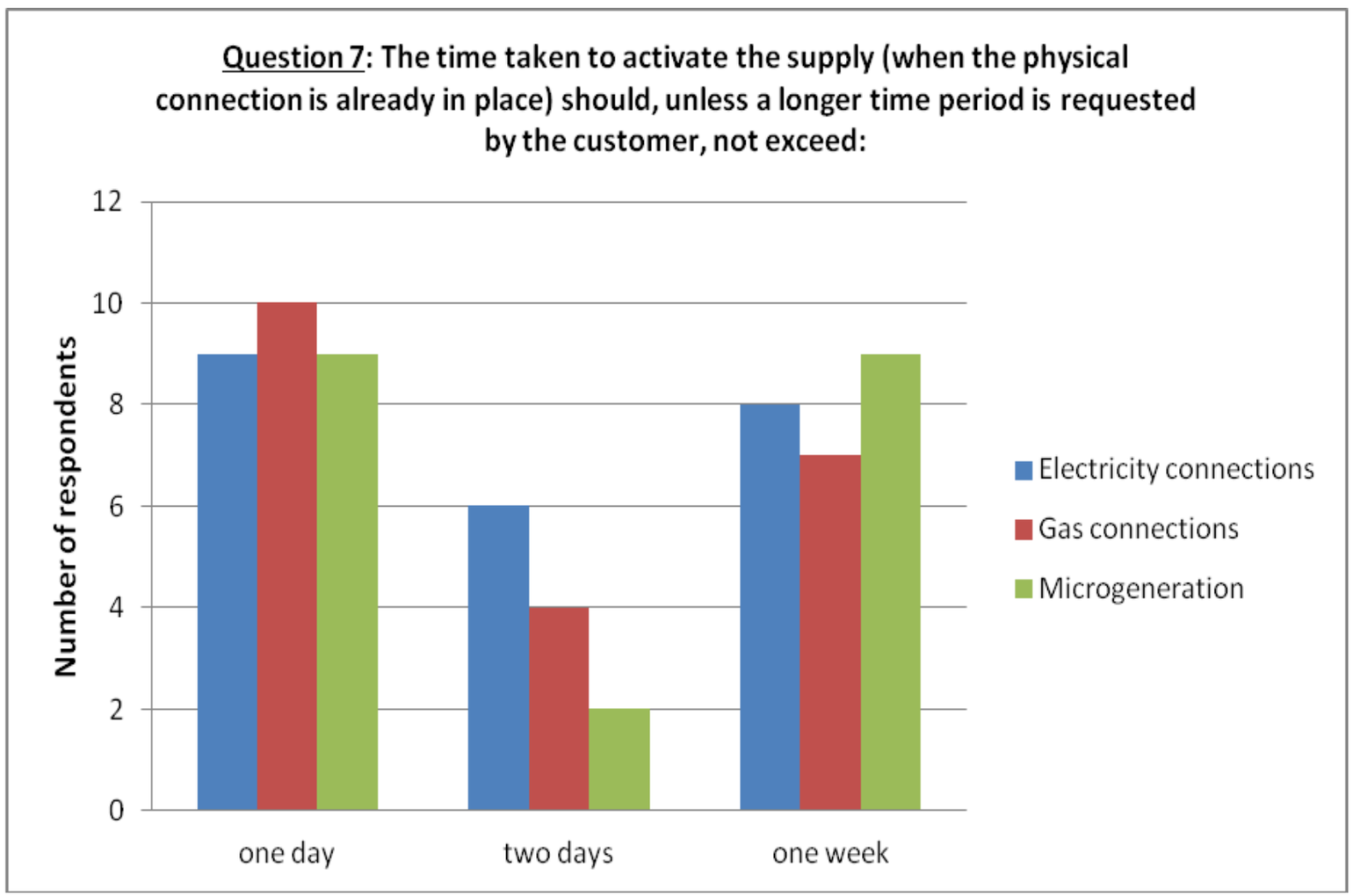
Block 2. Recommendation 7: Activation of supply

The time taken to activate the supply (when the physical connection is already in place) should, unless a longer time period is requested by the customer, not exceed:

- ☐ one day
- ☐ two days
- ☐ one week
- ☐ other time period



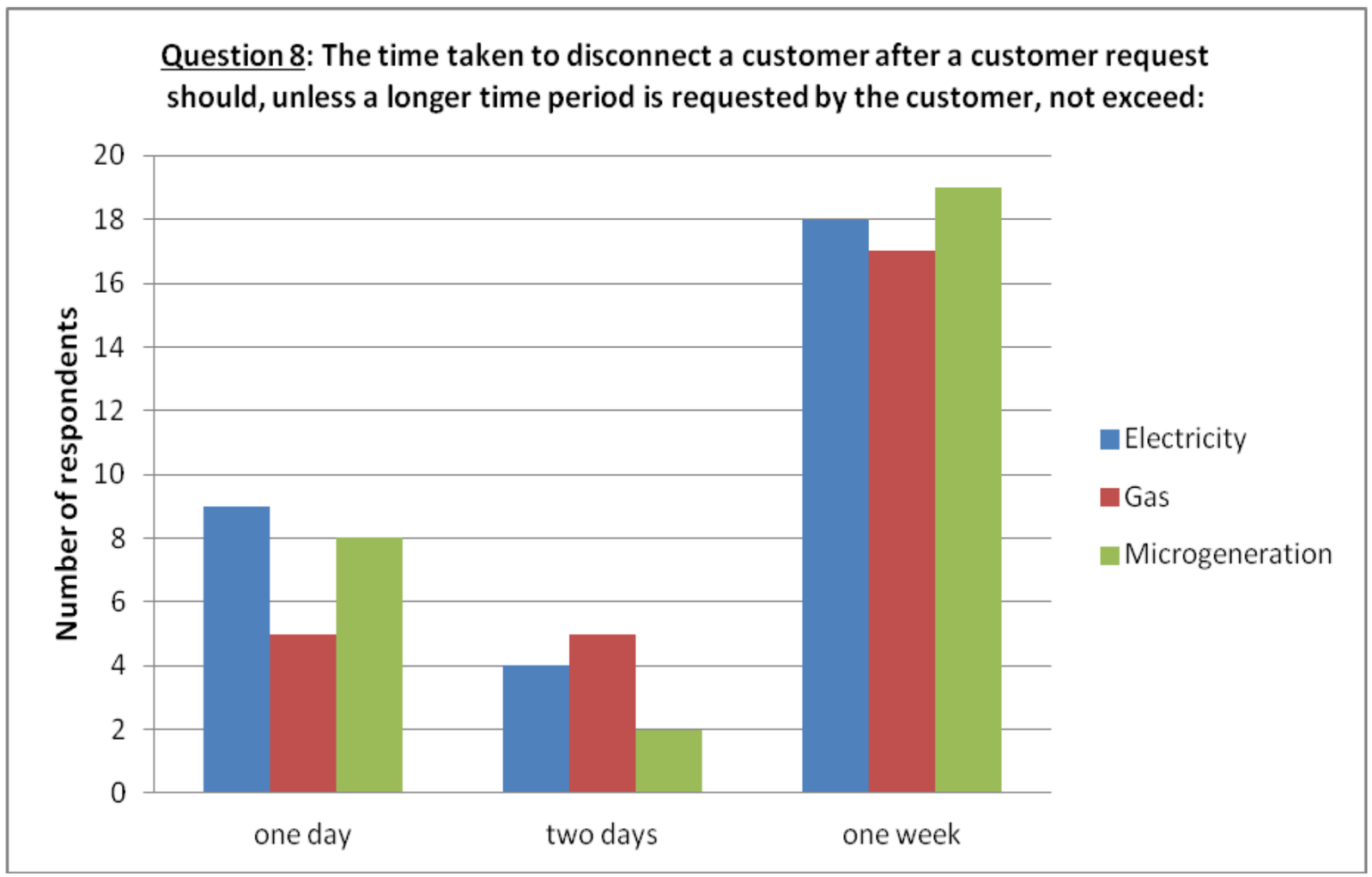
Selected comments by respondents to the public consultation:

- In several countries minor connection works and activation of supply are both considered activation of supply.

Block 2.Recommendation 8: Time for disconnection after a customer request

The time taken to disconnect a customer after a customer request should, unless a longer time period is requested by the customer, not exceed:

- ☐ one day
- ☐ two days
- ☐ one week
- ☐ other time period



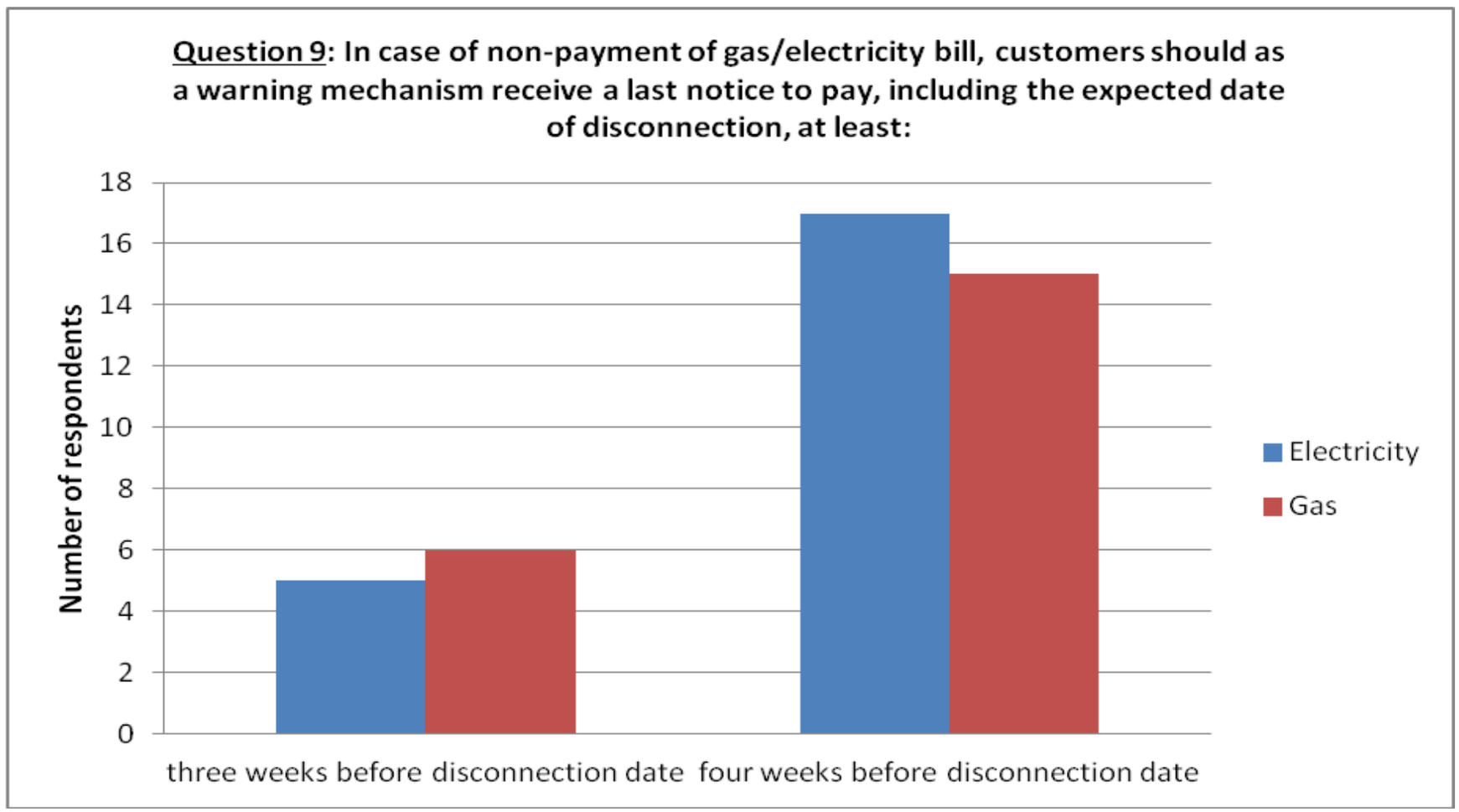
Selected comments by respondents to the public consultation:

- In most cases an appointment with the customer is necessary, so the necessary time period depends also on the availability of the customer.

Block 2. Recommendation 9: Warning mechanisms before a disconnection due to non-payment

In case of non-payment of the energy bill, customers should as a warning mechanism receive a last notice to pay, including the expected date of disconnection, at least:

- ☐ three weeks before disconnection date
- ☐ four weeks before disconnection date
- ☐ other



Selected comments by respondents to the public consultation:

- In several countries, the supplier is responsible for giving the customer appropriate warnings and applying appropriate procedures, before they send to the DSO a request for disconnection due to non-payment.
- Some countries have a two (or three) step process

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SESSION 3:

Focus on reaction of supply, planned interruptions, information during un-planned interruptions

Draft recommendations 10 – 14

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Service quality levels for maintenance, customer information and safety issues

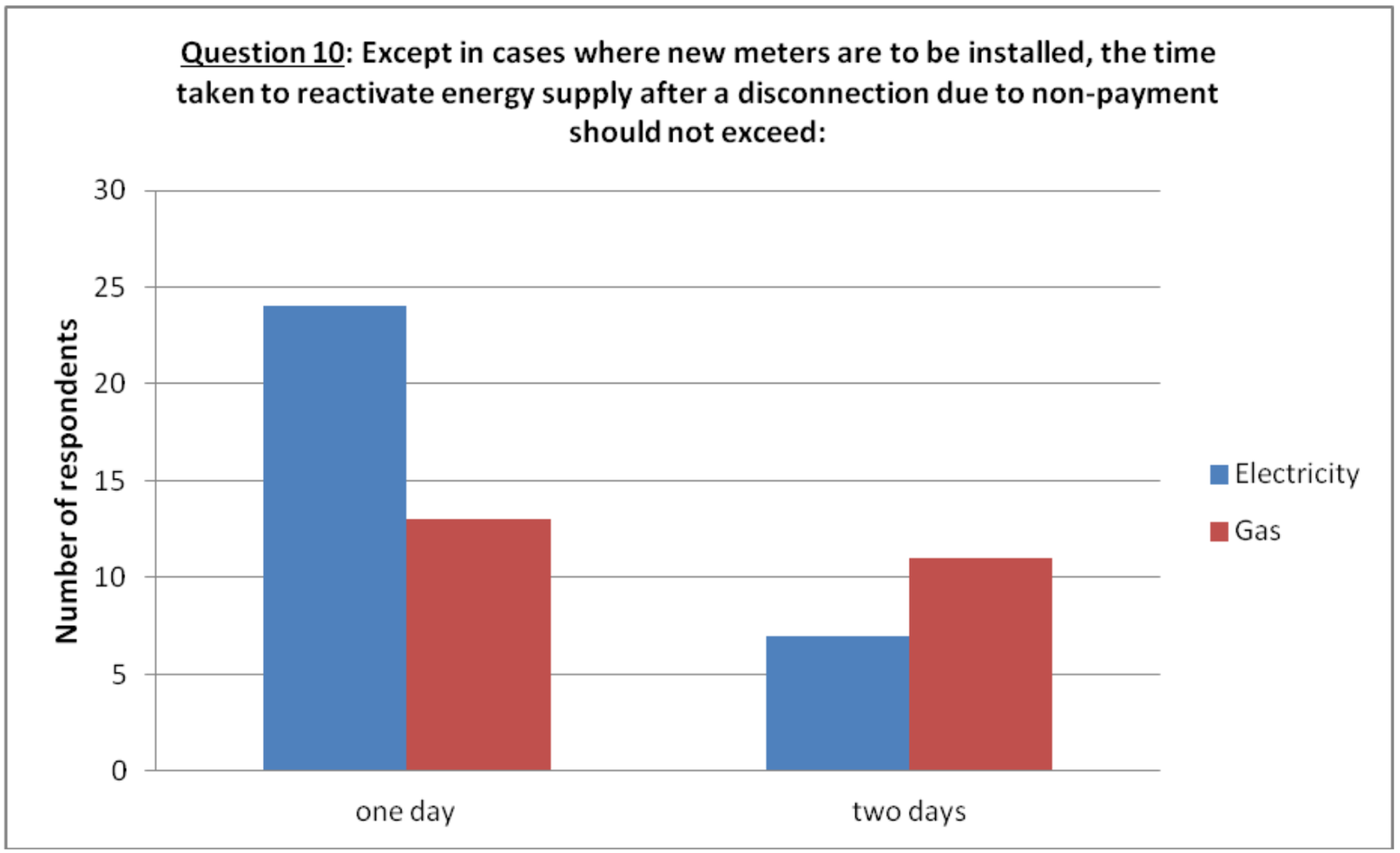
DSOs are responsible for grid maintenance and safety

Service	Recommendations about
Maintenance	• Time of notification of planned supply interruptions • Duration limit of a planned supply interruption • Information about un-planned energy interruptions
Customer Information and safety	• Accessible information on services and rights regarding connection and disconnection • Accessible information on correct installation handling including safety measures • Telephone number for emergencies

Block 3. Recommendation 10: Reactivation after a disconnection due to non-payment

Except in cases where new meters are to be installed, the time taken to reactivate the energy supply after a disconnection due to non-payment should not exceed:

- ☐ one day
- ☐ two days
- ☐ other time period



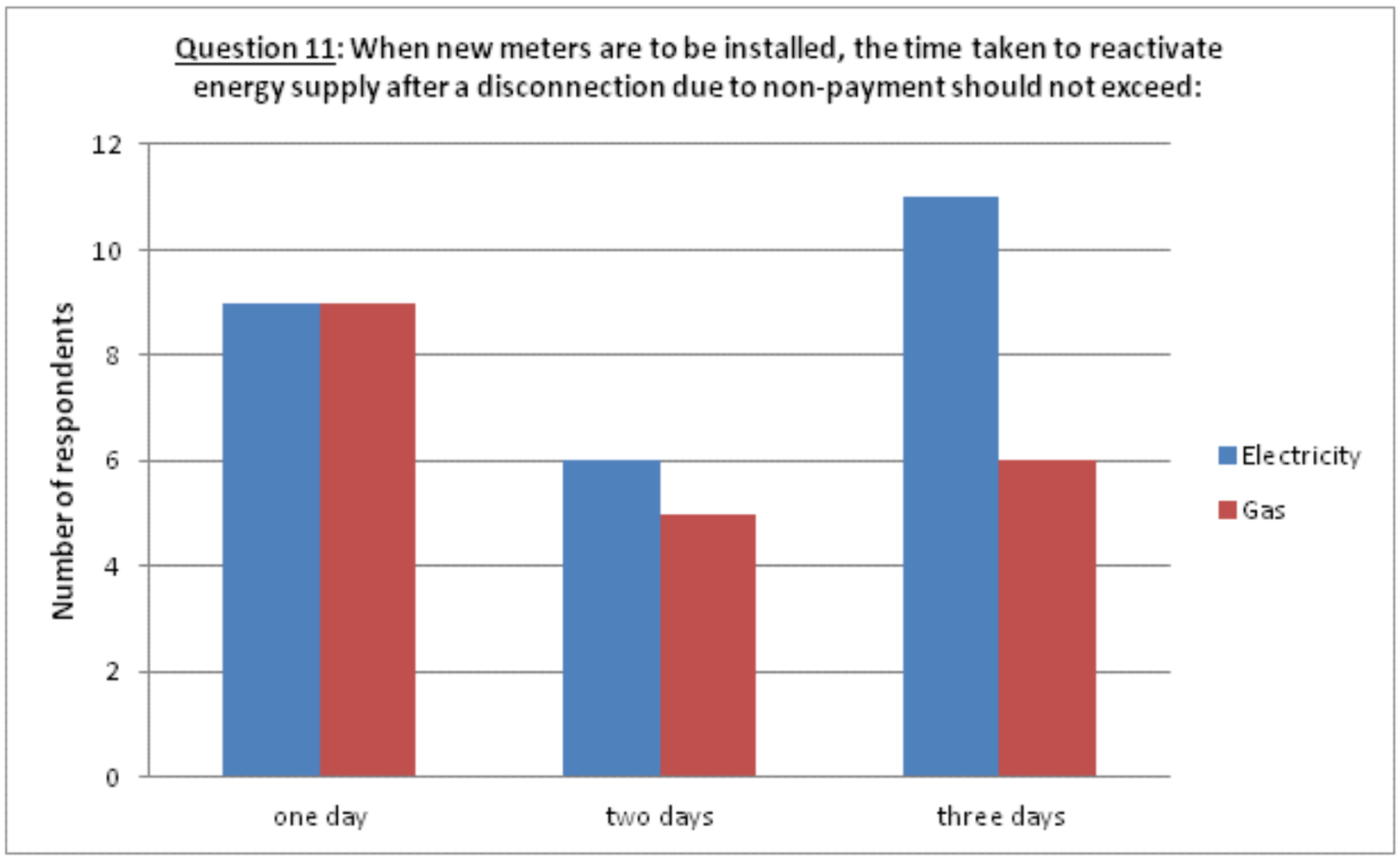
Selected comments by respondents to the public consultation:

- Electricity is an essential good for any customer and, therefore, we understand reactivation should be seen as a priority by the DSO, once the customer regularizes his/her situation.
- In UK reactivation is done by the supplier.

Block 3. Recommendation 11: Reactivation after a disconnection due to non-payment (new meters needed)

When new meters are to be installed, the time taken to reactivate the energy supply after a disconnection due to non-payment should not exceed:

- ☐ one day
- ☐ two days
- ☐ three days
- ☐ other time period



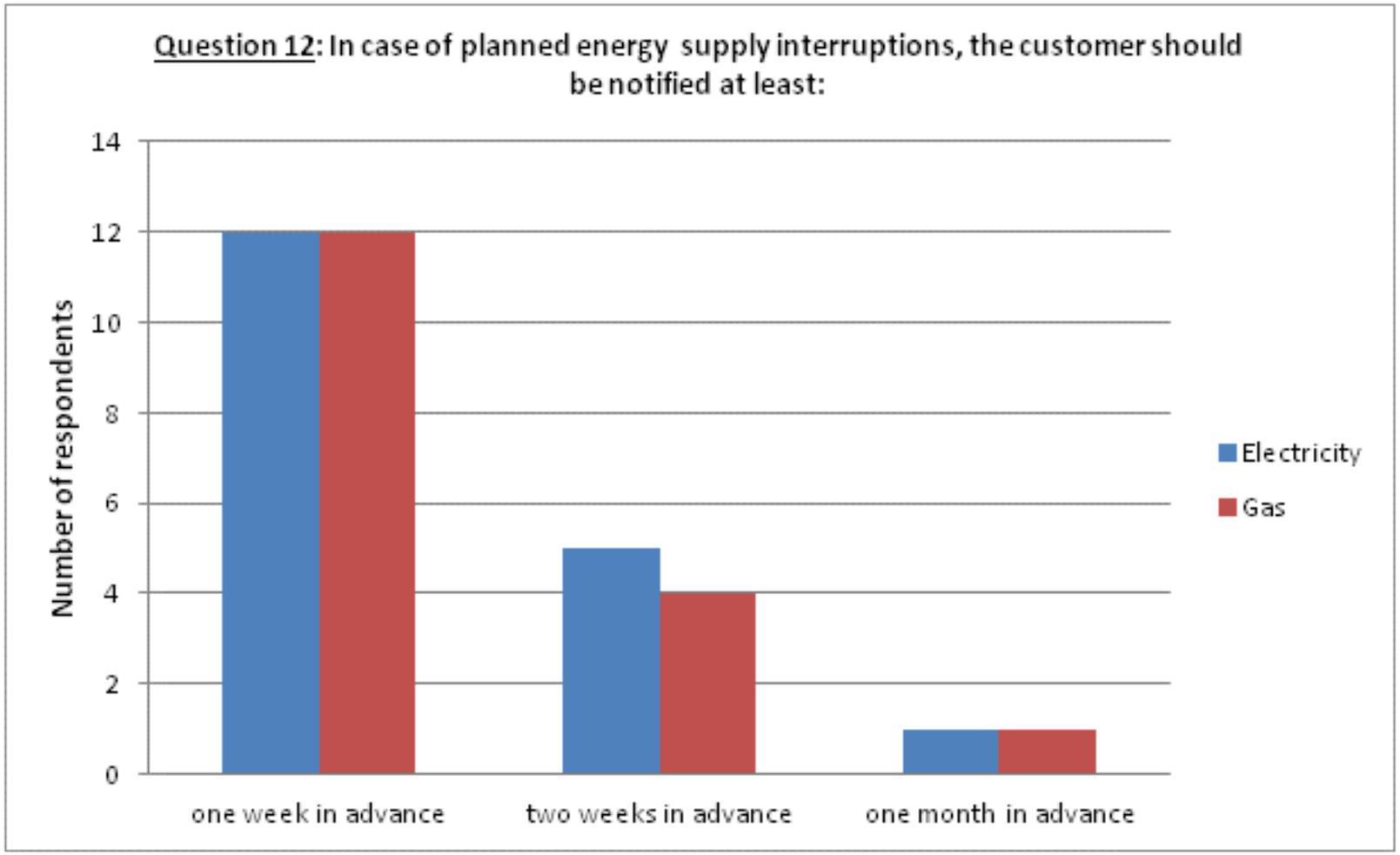
Selected comments by respondents to the public consultation:

- In several countries, disconnections due to non-payment do not lead to the meter removal.

Block 3. Recommendation 12: Planned energy supply interruptions

In case of planned energy supply interruptions, the customer should be notified at least:

- ☐ one week in advance
- ☐ two weeks in advance
- ☐ one month in advance
- ☐ other time period

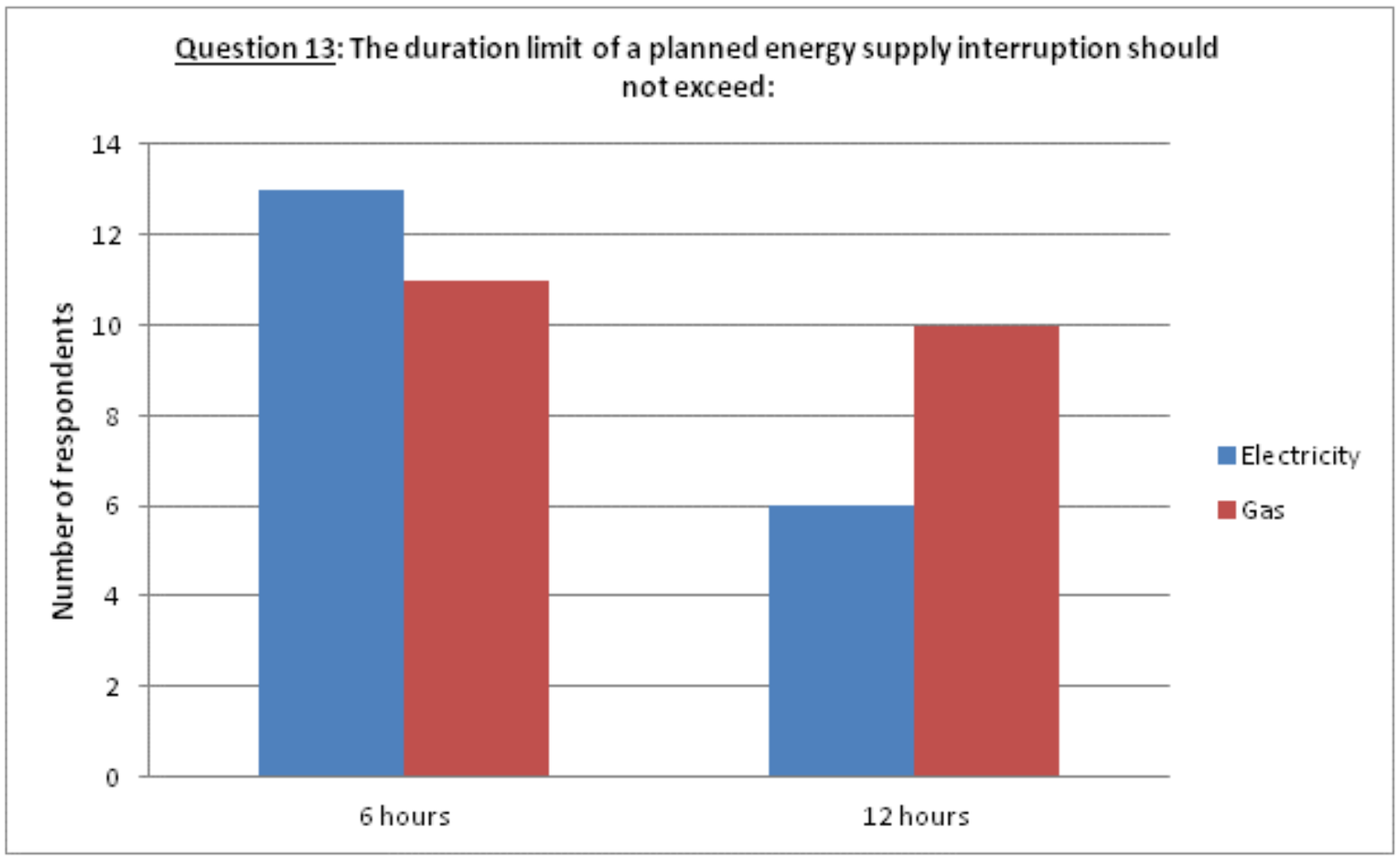


Selected comments by respondents to the public consultation:

- Several shorter periods are mentioned (from one to three days).

Block 3. Recommendation 13: Duration limit of a planned energy supply interruption

The duration limit of a planned energy supply interruption should not exceed:	☐ 6 hours ☐ 12 hours ☐ other time period



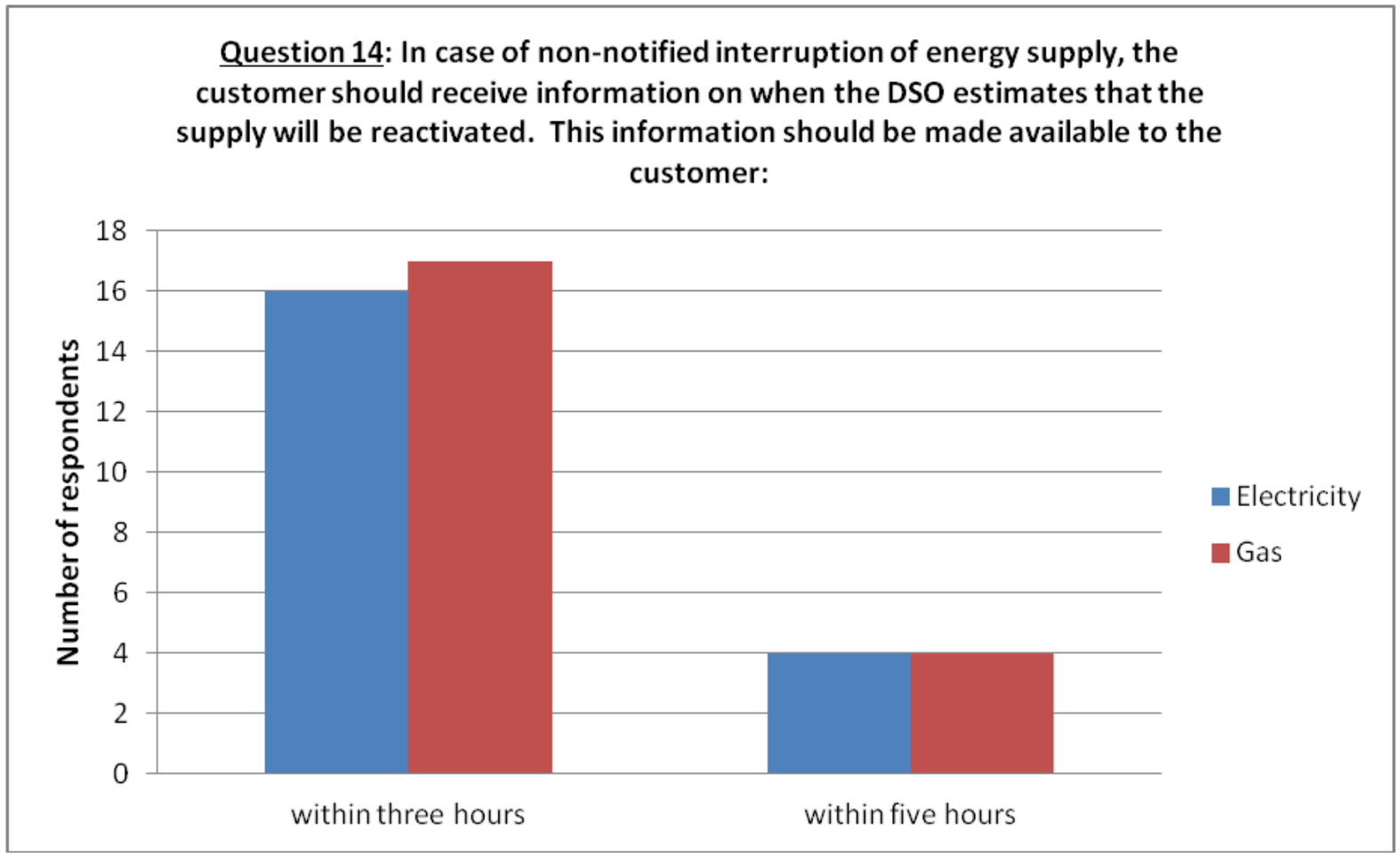
Selected comments by respondents to the public consultation:

- The duration limit should be the time required to keep food in the fridge in the best conditions, in any case, no longer than 4 hours.

Block 3. Recommendation 14: Unplanned interruptions. Customer's information

In case of non-notified interruption of energy supply, the customer should receive information on when the DSO estimates that the supply will be reactivated. This information should be made available to the customer through a variety of channels, not least the web. This information should be made available to the customer:

- ☐ within three hours
- ☐ within five hours
- ☐ other time period



Selected comments by respondents to the public consultation:

- Immediately, by telephone consumer information services and by the web, giving preference to the former provided that access to information by the internet is not widespread.

CEER hearing on Regulating the Quality of Distribution Services

SESSION 4:

Focus on information on services and rights, customer enquiries, safety and emergency

Draft recommendations 15 – 22

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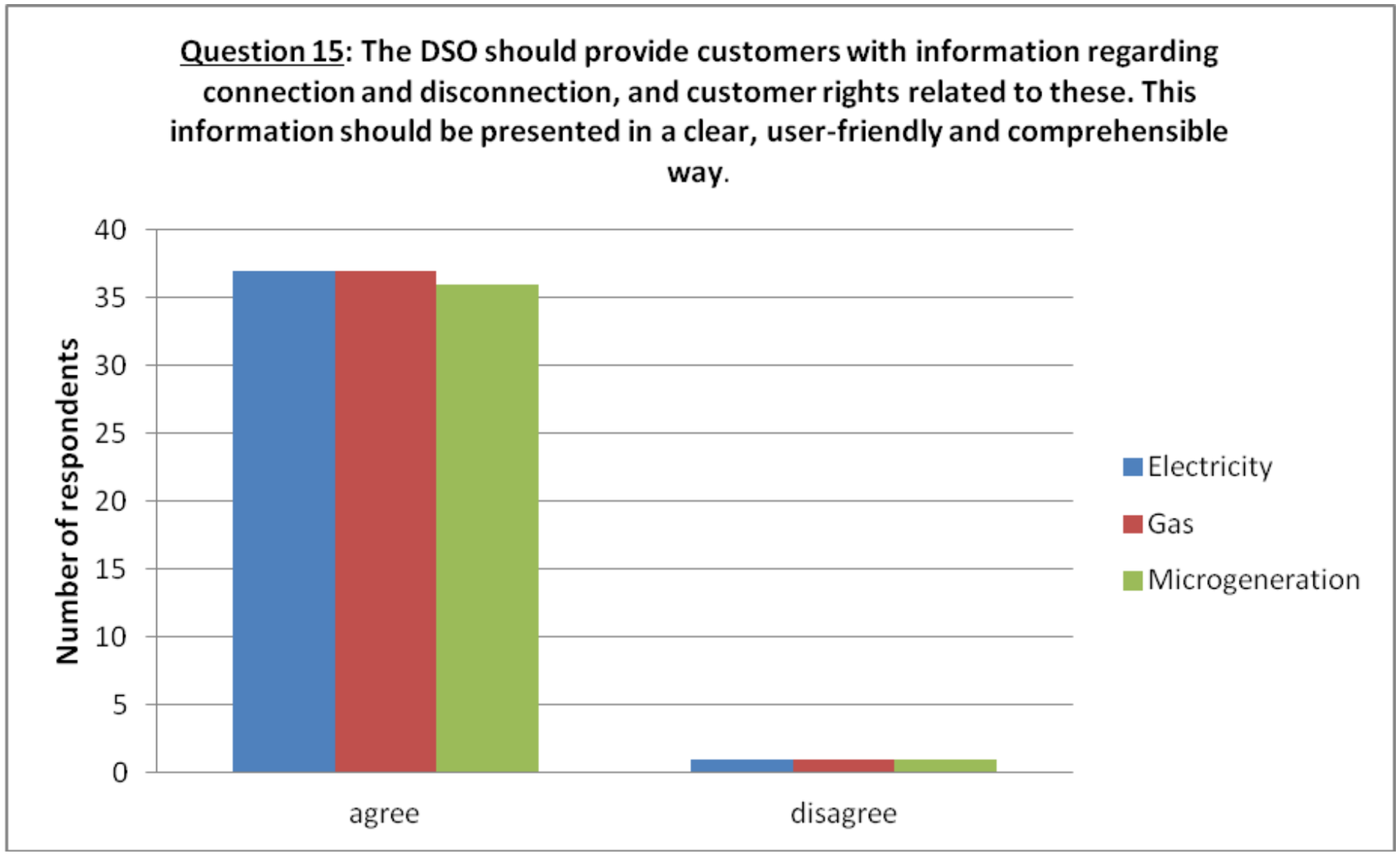
Block 4. Recommendation 15: Customer's information on connections

The DSO should provide customers with information regarding connection, disconnection, and customer rights related to these. This information should be presented in a clear, user-friendly and comprehensible way:

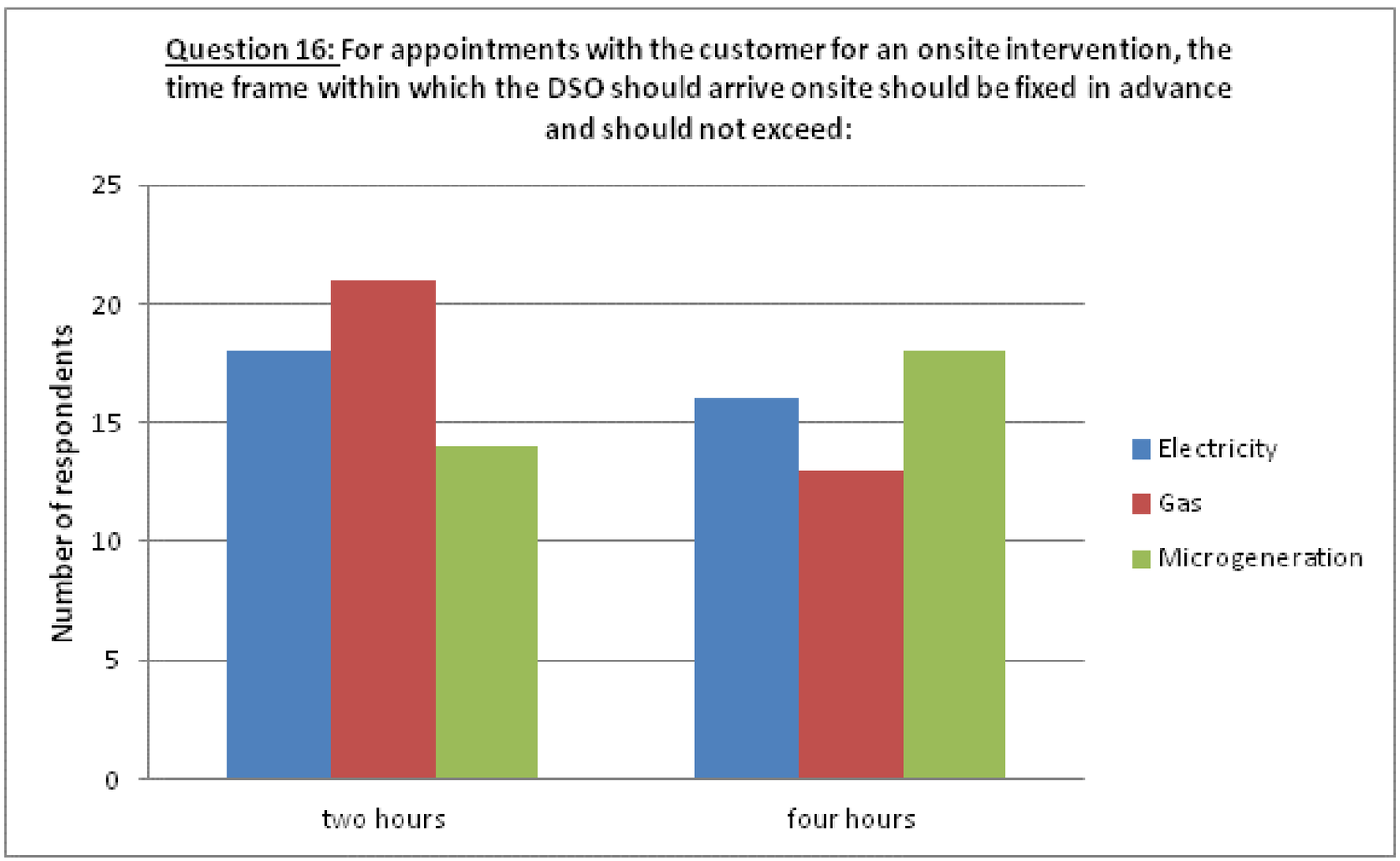
☐ agree
☐ disagree



Block 4. Recommendation 16: Appointments with the customer

For appointments with the customer for an onsite intervention, the time frame within which the DSO should arrive onsite should be fixed in advance and should not exceed:

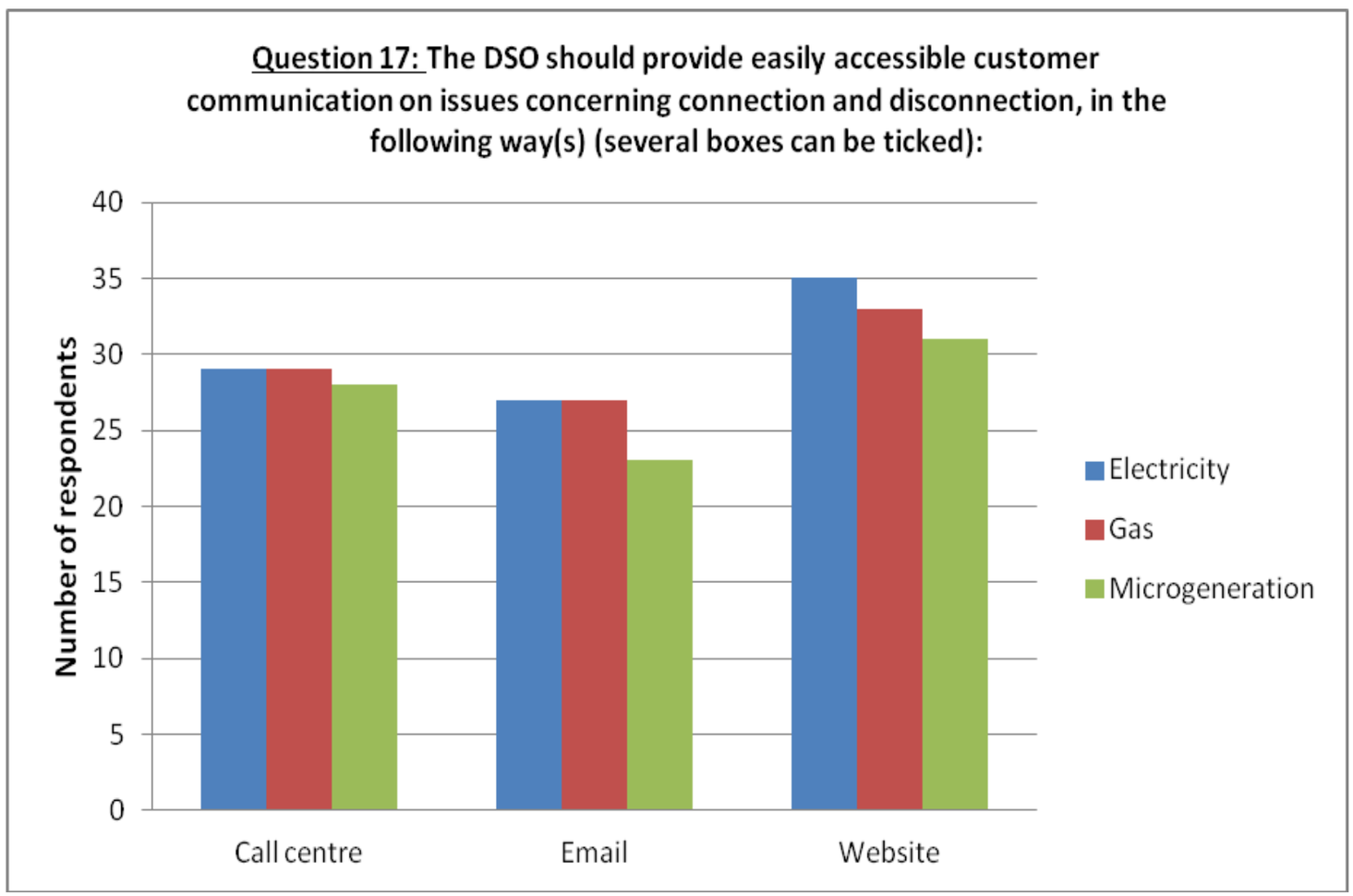
- ☐ two hours
- ☐ four hours
- ☐ other time period



Block 4. Recommendation 17: Channels for customer's information

The DSO should provide easily accessible customer communication on issues concerning connection and disconnection, in the following ways:

- ☐ call centre
- ☐ e-mail
- ☐ website
- ☐ other

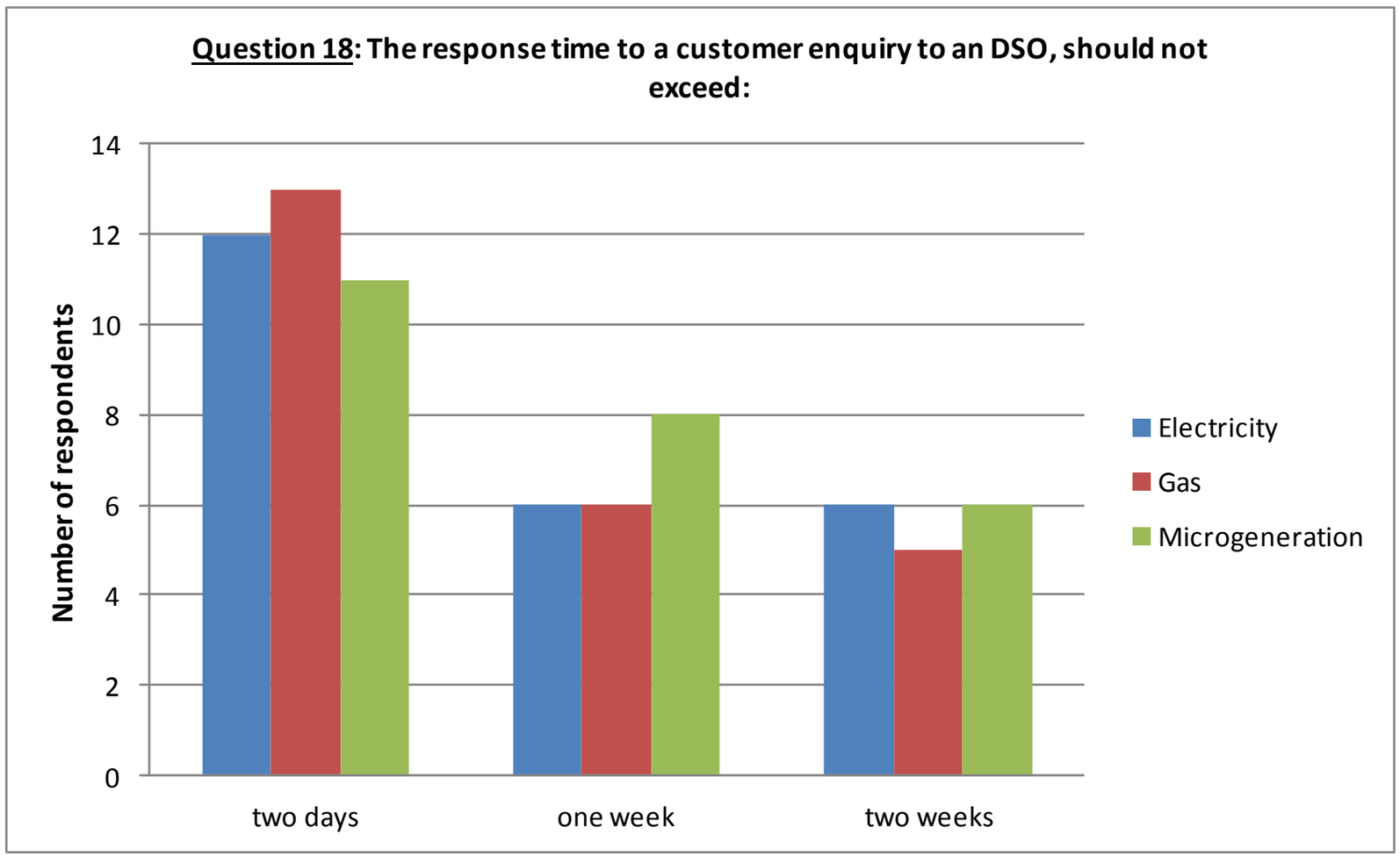


Call center Availability	7 days / 24 h	7 responses
	5-6 days per week /8-12 hours	9 responses
Longest acceptable waiting time in phone queue	1 min	3 responses
	2 min	2 responses
	3 min	6 responses
	5 -7 min	4 responses
Longest acceptable waiting time for answering an e-mail	< 6 hours	2 responses
	1 day	4 responses
	2 -4 days	8 responses
	5- 10 days	4 responses

Block 4. Recommendation 18: Response time to a customer enquiry

The response time to a customer enquiry to an DSO, should not exceed:

- ☐ two days
- ☐ one week
- ☐ two weeks
- ☐ other time period



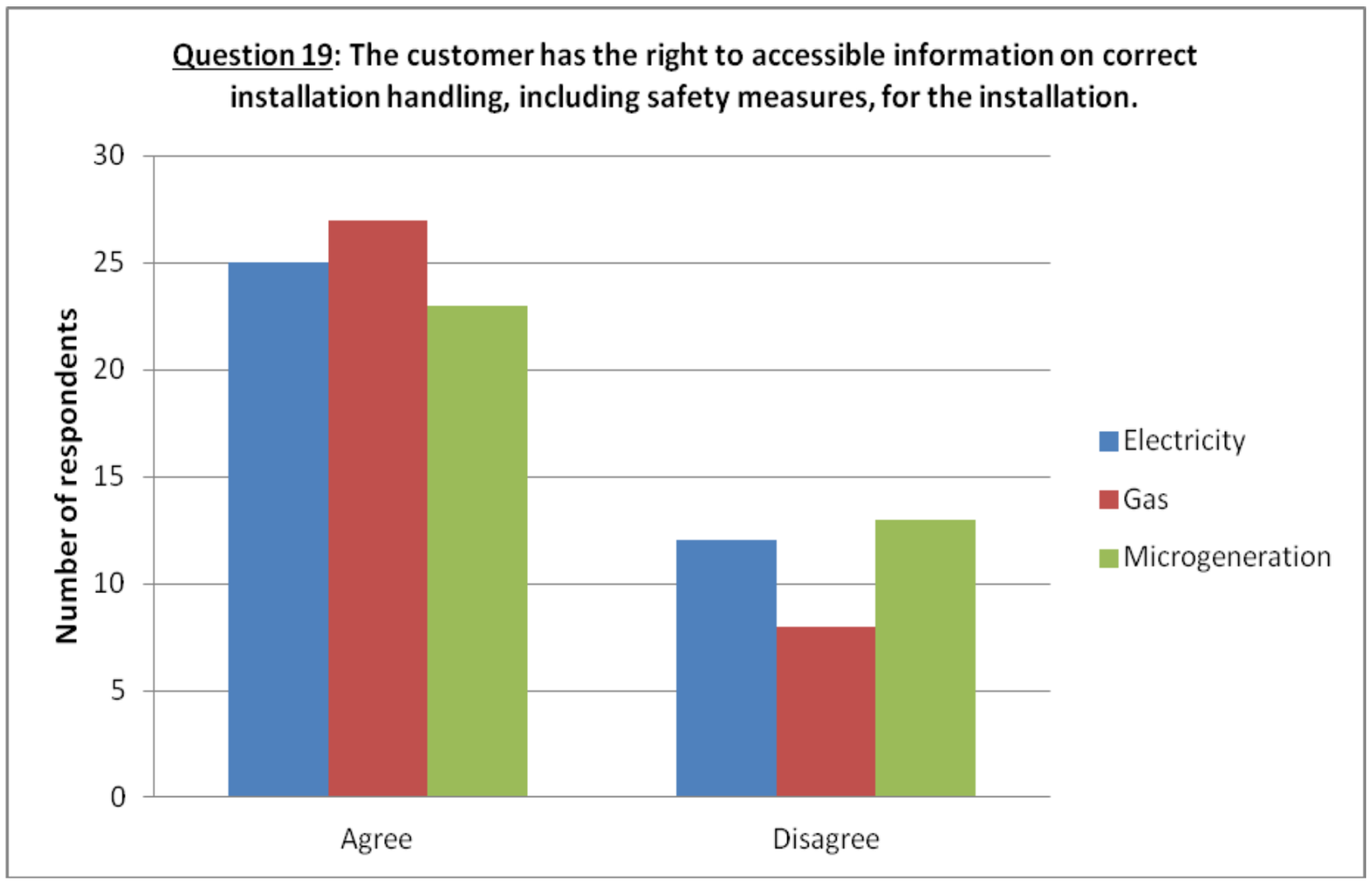
Selected comments by respondents to the public consultation:

- The response time highly depends on the channel used. A question asked by phone can be answered immediately. If a written answered is needed, the time is longer.

Block 4. Recommendation 19: Customer's information on correct installation handling and safety

The customer has the right to accessible information on correct installation handling, including safety measures, for the installation:

☐ agree
☐ disagree

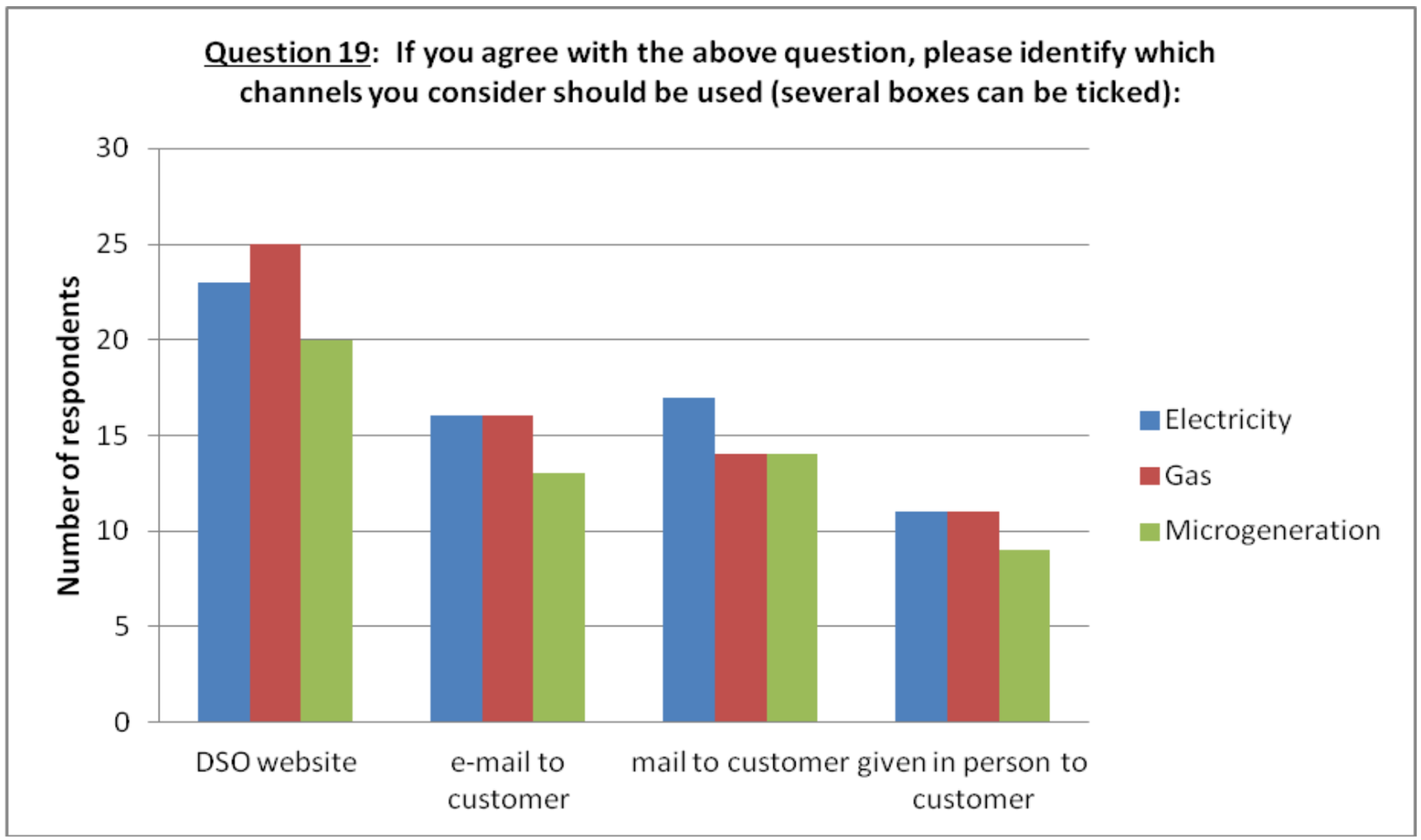


Selected comments by respondents to the public consultation:

- Not a DSO responsibility in several countries:
- it is a supplier's job because the supplier is in charge of the relationship with the customer
- the installation of the customer's electrical system has to be carried out by a licensed electrician

Block 4. Recommendation 19: Customer's information on correct installation handling and safety. Channels

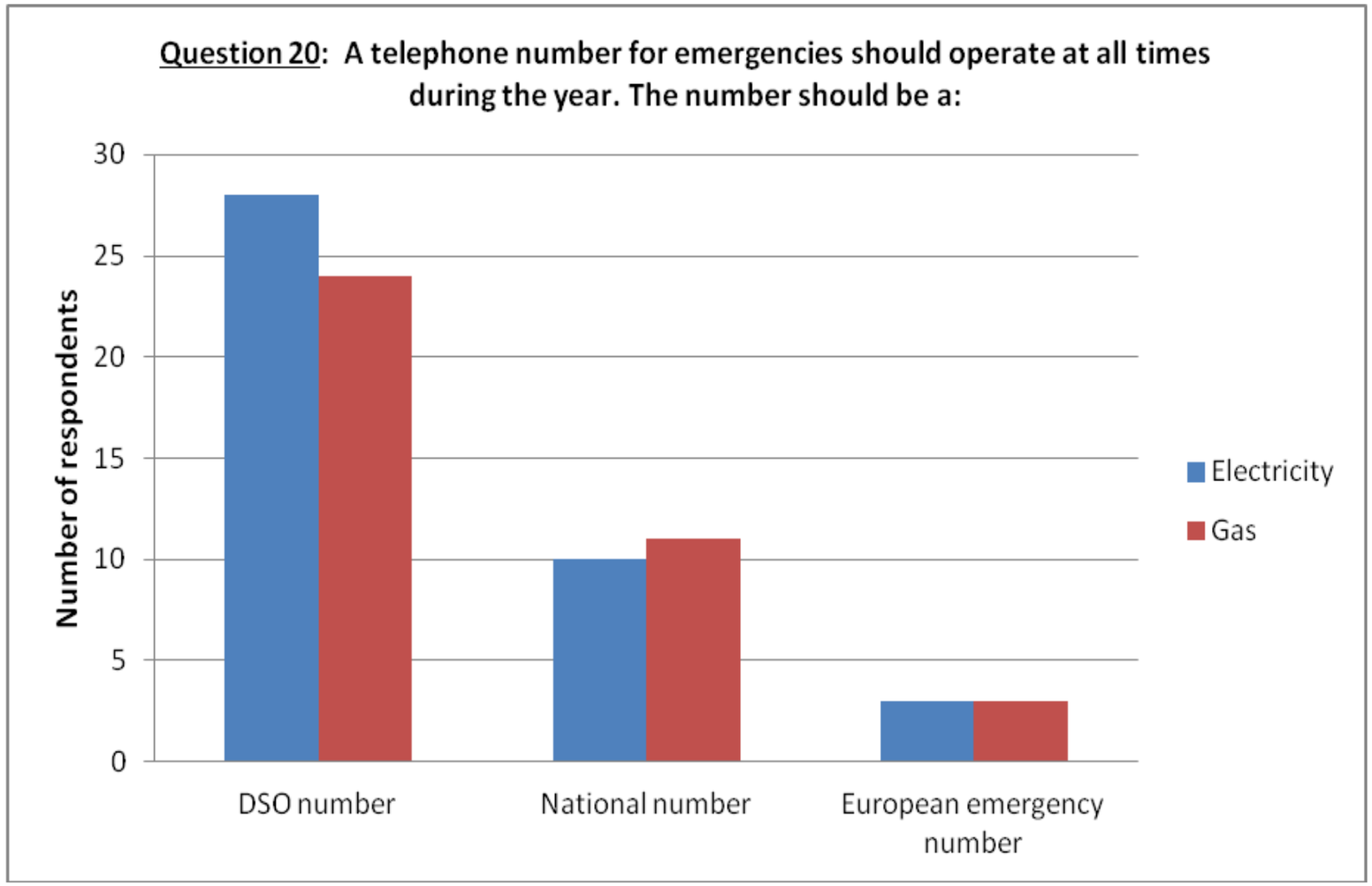
Access shall be available through the following channels (several boxes can be ticked):	☐ DSO website ☐ e-mail to customer ☐ mail to customer ☐ given in person



Block 4. Recommendation 20: Telephone number for electricity or gas emergencies

A telephone number for (electricity, gas) emergencies, should operate at all times during the year. The number should be a:

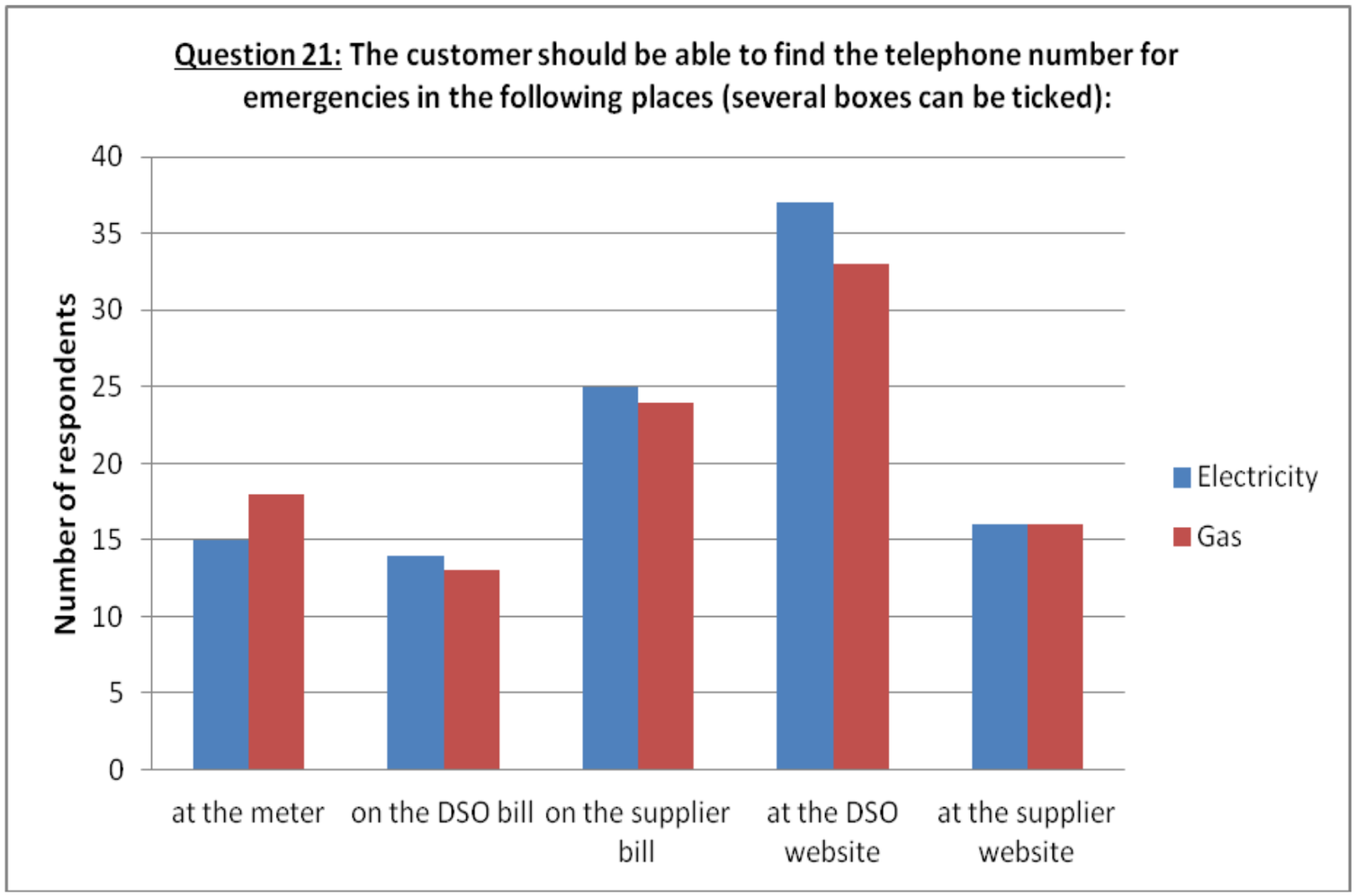
- ☐ DSO number
- ☐ National number
- ☐ European emergency number



Block 4. Recommendation 21: Telephone number for electricity or gas emergencies

The customer should be able to find the telephone number for (electricity, gas) emergencies in the following places (several boxes can be ticked):

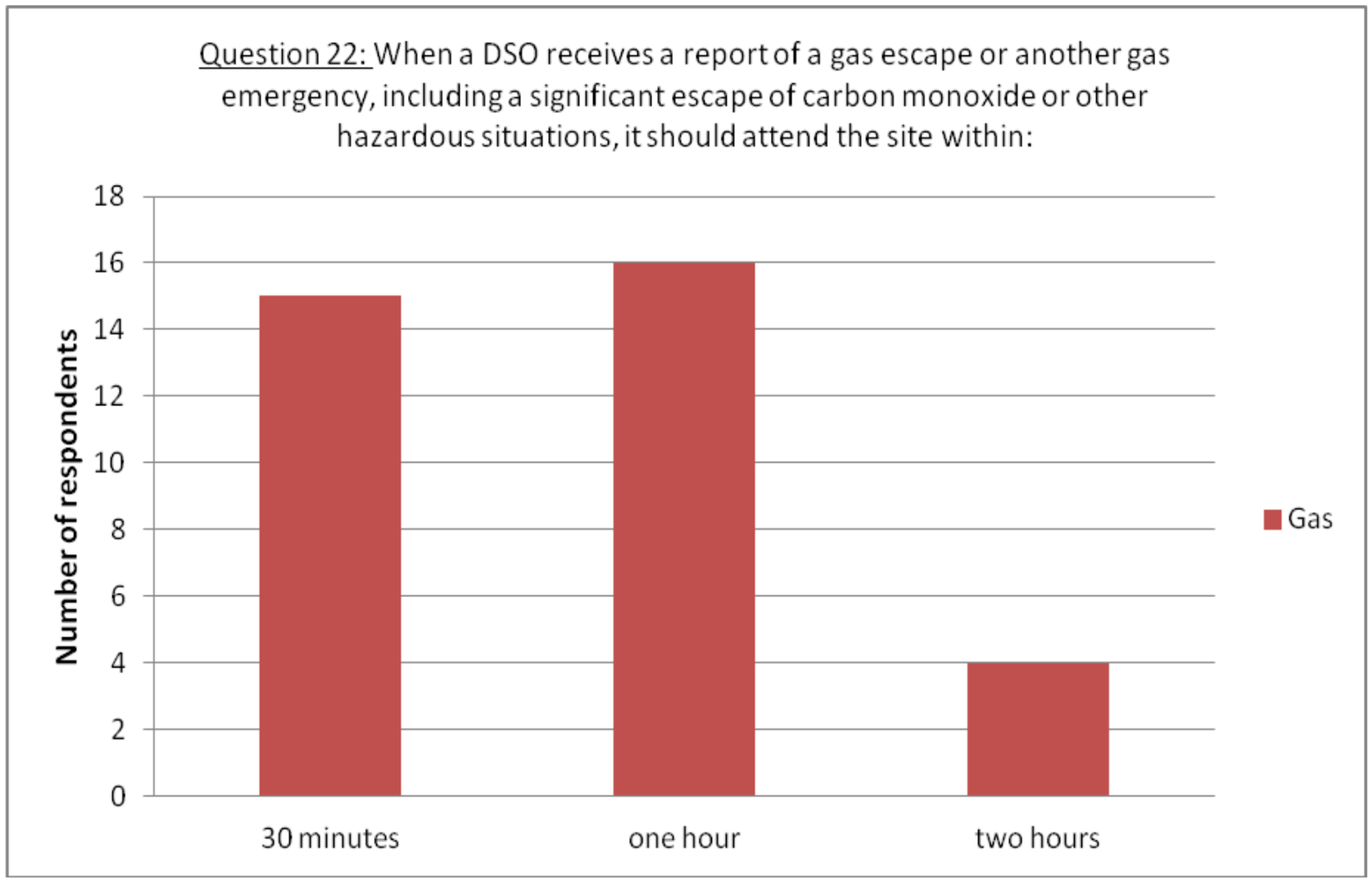
- ☐ at the meter
- ☐ on the DSO bill
- ☐ on the supplier bill
- ☐ at the DSO website
- ☐ at the supplier website



Block 4. Recommendation 22: Time to attend a gas hazardous situation

When a DSO receives a report of a gas escape or other gas emergency, including a significant escape of carbon monoxide or other hazardous situations, it should attend the site within:

- ☐ 30 minutes
- ☐ one hour
- ☐ two hours



Selected comments by respondents to the public consultation:

- Seams a clear gas-DSOs responsibility in all countries

Thank you for your kind attention

Visit: CEER Energy Customers

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