

# Energy security is most exciting area of IoT technology development, according to Wi-SUN Alliance smart utilities survey

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Energy security tops the list of the ‘most exciting’ areas of smart utility development, ahead of climate-related and disaster management technologies. This is according to a recent survey among senior professionals at US utility companies, and interviews at leading utility industry event, DISTRIBUTECH 2023 (<https://www.distributech.com/>), last month. Commissioned by Wi-SUN Alliance (<https://wi-sun.org/>), a global association of industry leading companies driving the adoption of interoperable wireless solutions for use in smart utilities and smart cities, the survey asked 250+ respondents about changes in the utilities industry, including the most exciting smart/IoT technology developments in the next 12 months.

Energy security is seen as ‘very exciting’ for 79% of respondents, more so than the development of smart buildings and infrastructure (75%), weather and climate (73%) and disaster management (69%) systems. This is at a time when concerns are high among policy makers and industry leaders because of major economic and geopolitical turmoil, such as the war in Ukraine, putting energy supplies at risk.

The energy sector is also facing a growing number of cyberattacks, with recent attacks aimed at ageing SCADA systems, as well as an increasingly interconnected energy infrastructure that is opening up opportunities for attackers to access systems and disrupt operations. The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) (<https://www.gao.gov/blog/securing-u.s.-electricity-grid-cyberattacks>) recently noted that, “nations and criminal groups pose the most significant cyber threats to US critical infrastructure, according to the Director of National Intelligence’s 2022 Annual Threat Assessment. These threat actors are increasingly capable of attacking the grid”.

Jeffrey Tufts, Global Director of Utility Solutions at Cisco (<https://www.cisco.com/>), a Wi-SUN Promoter member, comments: “Energy security and particularly cybersecurity is what we are being asked about most right now. The need to secure energy infrastructure has never been more important and will be an area of significant investment – in terms of pilots and adoption – over the next year or two.”

Jeff Scheb, Director of Product Management at Landis+Gyr (<https://www.landisgyr.com/>), a Wi-SUN Promoter member, agrees: “The global rise in cyberattacks means that everything is under scrutiny. As systems become more connected and automated, ensuring security across all network connection points is the first priority during design and implementation.” Scheb adds that connectivity with smart buildings and infrastructure is important because, “more grid-edge intelligence and connectivity are necessary to manage a dynamic energy distribution system”.

“Ensuring the security of our energy and water distribution networks is a critical factor in utility modernisation that cannot be overlooked. As utilities and cities face a growing risk of cyberattacks, investments in modern, highly secure and standards based Industrial IoT (IIoT) networks can help safeguard critical infrastructure while providing a scalable platform for future growth,” adds Ty Roberts, VP of Product Marketing, Itron (<https://www.itron.com/>).

Additional survey findings:

- The survey highlights the need for 'proven security and reliability' for smart utility networks, with 83% of respondents acknowledging that this is 'very important', more so than 'customer acceptance' (75%), 'open standards' (69%) and 'multi-vendor interoperability' (69%).
- More pilot projects and implementations (75%), and greater co-operation between public and private sectors (72%) are important to help drive development and innovation in the sector, while 70% of respondents believe more government funding/legislation is important.
- Almost three-quarters (74%) of survey respondents believe electric vehicle charging will be the biggest focus for utilities when it comes to smart grid deployments in the next 6-11 months. Outage management, advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) and distributed energy resources (DER) are also a priority for utility professionals (71%).
- Around three-quarters (74%) of respondents acknowledge that a hybrid of two or more communications networks technologies – including cellular, power line communication, RF mesh and WiFi – will be very important for future smart utility development.

Wi-SUN Alliance's Journey to IoT Maturity (<https://wi-sun.org/iot-maturity-model/>) report published in 2022 highlighted security as one of the top three barriers to IoT adoption for around a quarter of senior decision makers across industries. Phil Beecher, CEO and President, Wi-SUN Alliance, says: "While this figure was lower than our first report five years earlier, security is still very much a concern. We also saw a rise in concerns over data privacy – understandably, with more legislation around data protection. IoT initiatives are increasingly generating huge volumes of data, and while this information may be made entirely secure by design, risks remain."

#### Research methodology

Censuswide conducted an online survey of 250+ senior decision makers working in IT, Operations and Production at US utilities in Jan 2023, supplemented by interviews at DISTRIBUTECH, an event for utilities, technology providers, and industry leaders, held in San Diego, California on Feb 7-9, 2023.

#### About Wi-SUN Alliance

Wi-SUN Alliance is a global non-profit member-based association made up of industry leading companies. Its mission is to drive the global proliferation of interoperable wireless solutions for use in smart cities, smart grids and other Internet of Things (IoT) applications using open global standards from organizations, such as IEEE, IETF, TIA, TTC and ETSI. With 300 members worldwide, membership of the Wi-SUN Alliance is open to all industry stakeholders and includes silicon vendors, product vendors, services providers, utilities, universities, enterprises and municipalities and local government organizations. For more information, visit: [www.wi-sun.org](http://www.wi-sun.org).

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