Is Your Business Office Properly Staffed?

Presented by

Gary Sanders

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Presenter Background

- Gary Sanders
  - Freelance Utility Billing Consultant
  - Worked with utility billing software since 1979
  - Founding partner of Logics in 1983
  - Worked with over 200 utilities
  - Publish free, bi-weekly email newsletter and blog
  - Consult with utilities to improve business office operations and better serve their customers

Staffing Survey Background

➢ In 2015, I conducted a business review for one of our larger customers

➢ The office manager thought they were significantly understaffed

➢ I contacted our 30 largest customers and asked three questions:

  ➢ How many accounts do you bill?

  ➢ How frequently do you bill (monthly, bi-monthly, quarterly, etc.)?

  ➢ How many employees are in your business office?

Staffing Survey Background

➢ From these results I calculated a value called Annual Accounts billed per Office Employee

➢ I used this as part of my justification to recommend hiring another employee to fill the vacant position

➢ I was already conducting a biennial Utility Fee Survey, so in the intervening years I started the Utility Staffing Survey

Utility Staffing Survey Questions

➢ How many active accounts are billed?

➢ How frequently is each account billed?

➢ Which services are billed for?

➢ Number of billing cycles?

➢ Number of new applications for service each year?

➢ Number of employees in each functional area?

Utility Staffing Survey Questions

➢ Functional Area Questions

    ➢ Meter Reading Processing

    ➢ Bill Printing

    ➢ Mail Payment Processing

    ➢ Phone Credit Card Payments

    ➢ Service Order Processing
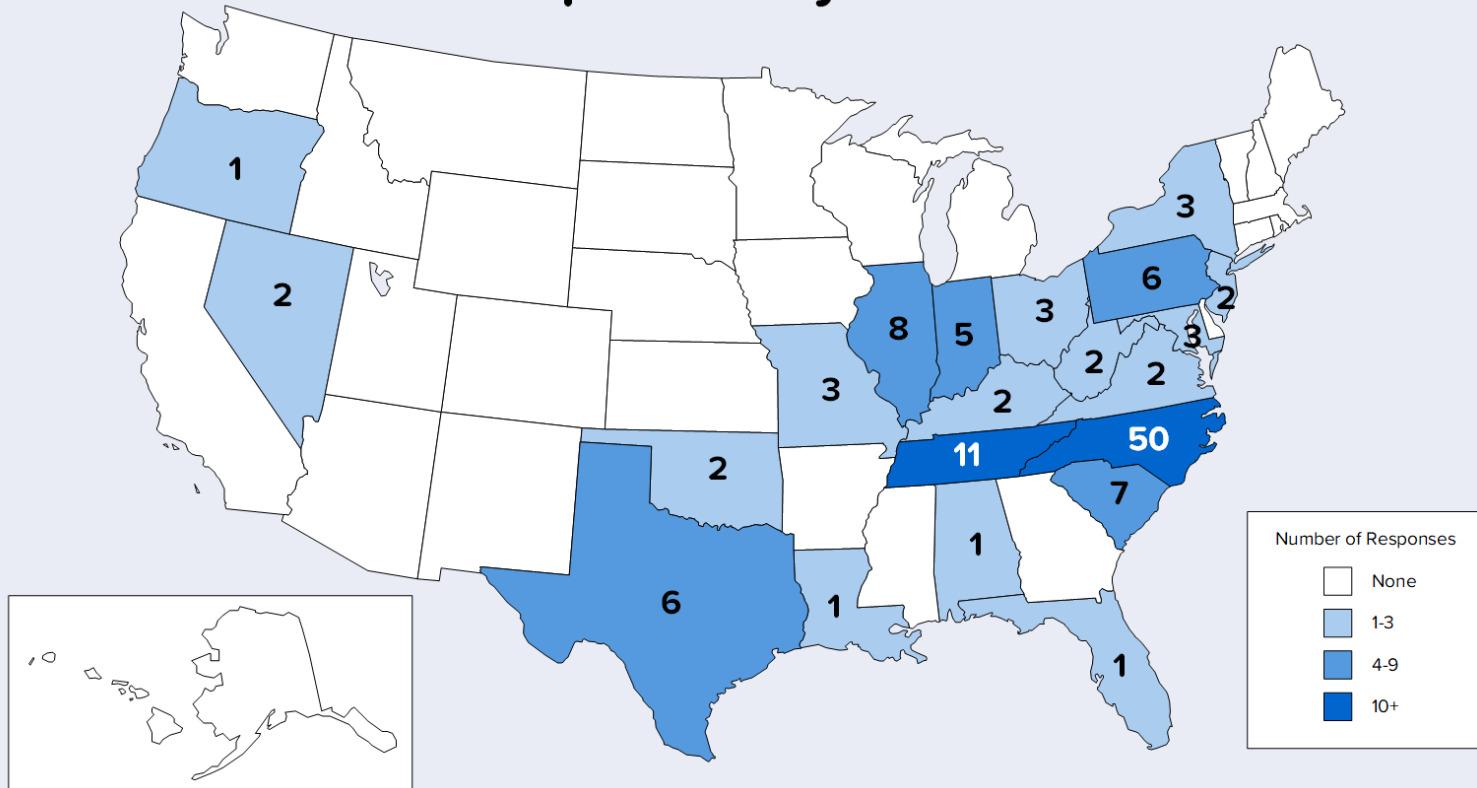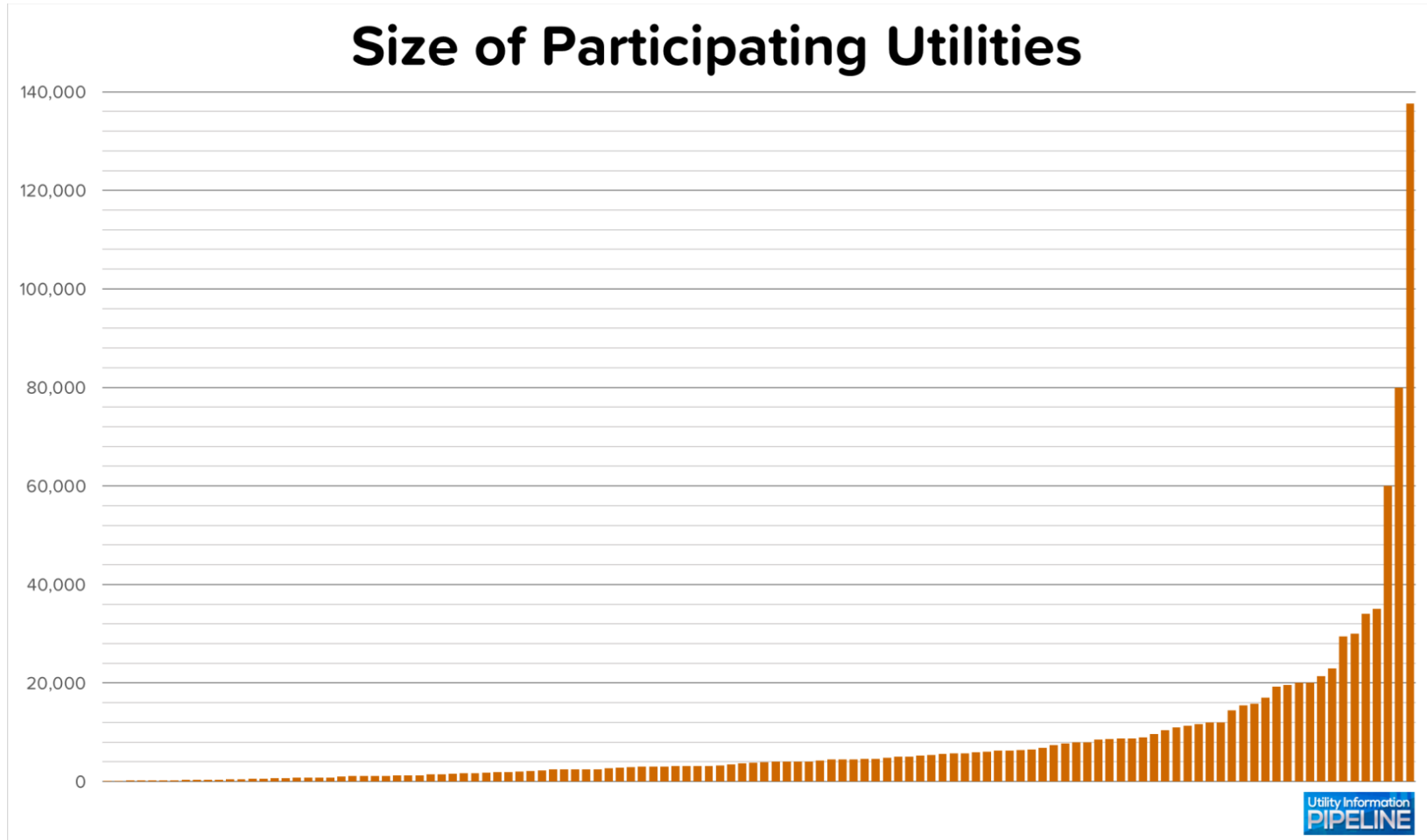
2024 Utility Staffing Survey Results

https://utilityinformationpipeline.com/2024-Utility-Staffing-Survey-Results/

Staffing Survey Demographics

Responses by State

Size of Participating Utilities

Size of Utilities under 20,000

Size of Participating Utilities under 20,000 Accounts
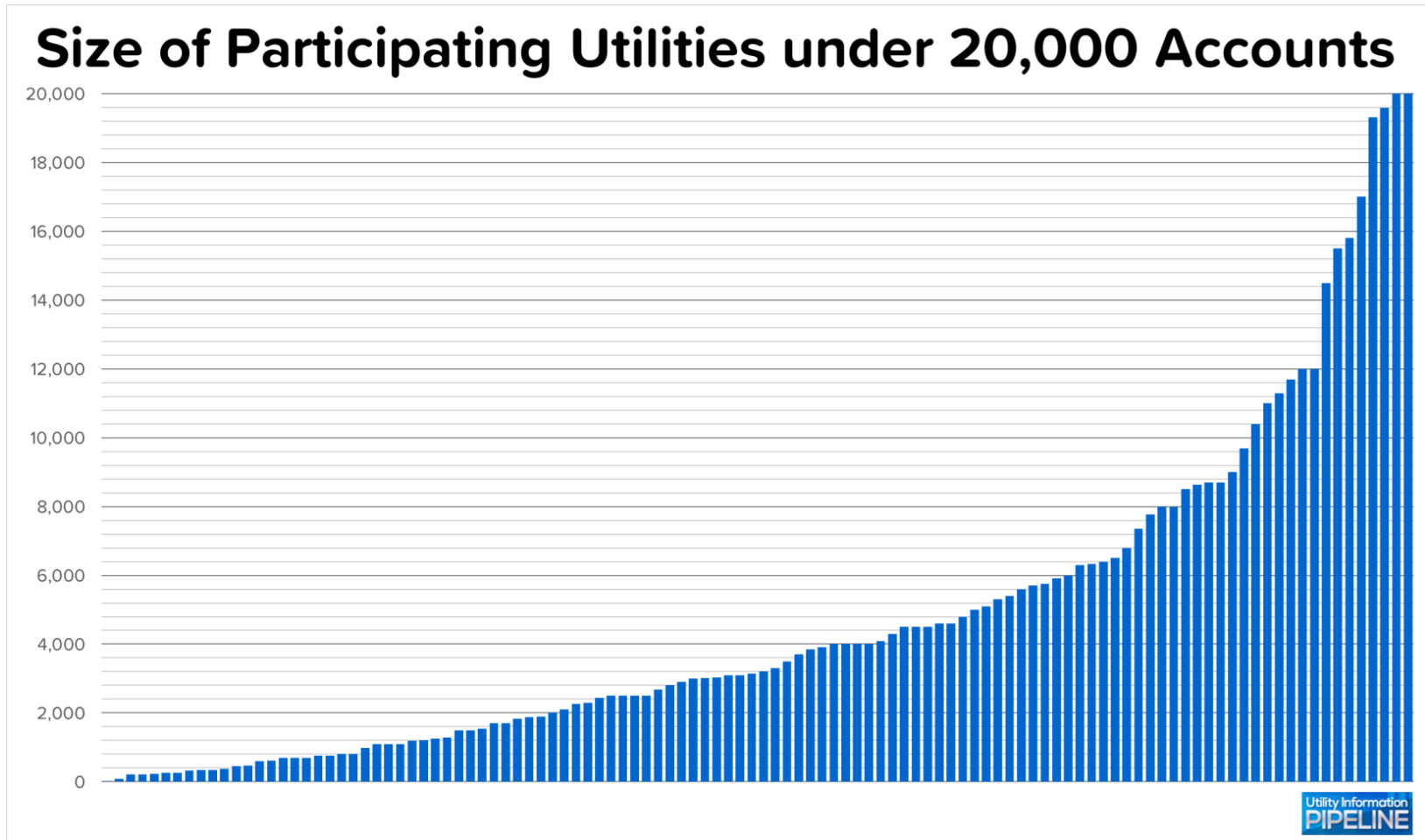
Types of Utilities

Types of Utilities Responding

Type	Count
Municipality	77
Utility District/Authority	25
County	8
Member Owned	7
Privately Owned	2
Non-Profit	1
University	1
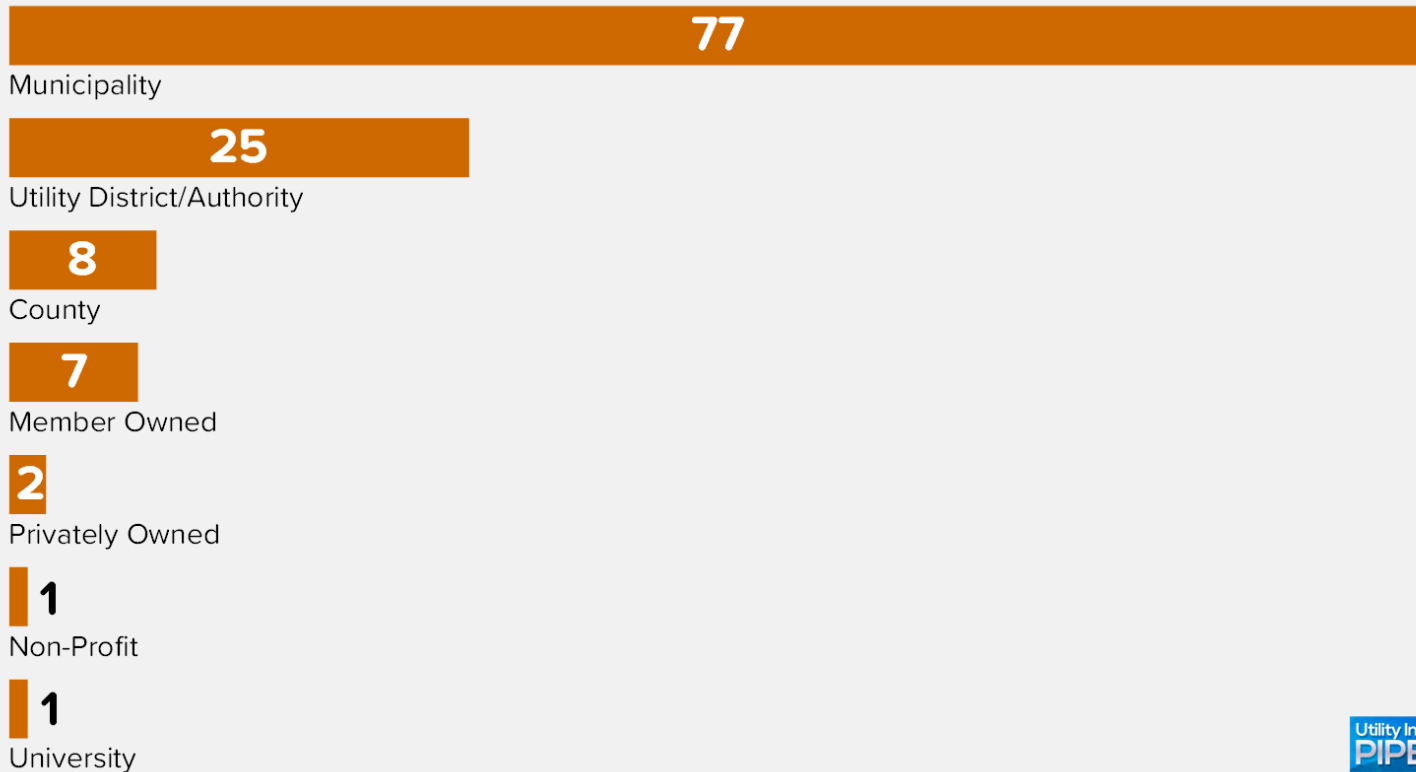
Services Provided

Services Provided by Responding Utilities

Service	Value
Water & Sewer	89
Water	27
Sewer	3
Electricity	15
Natural Gas	3

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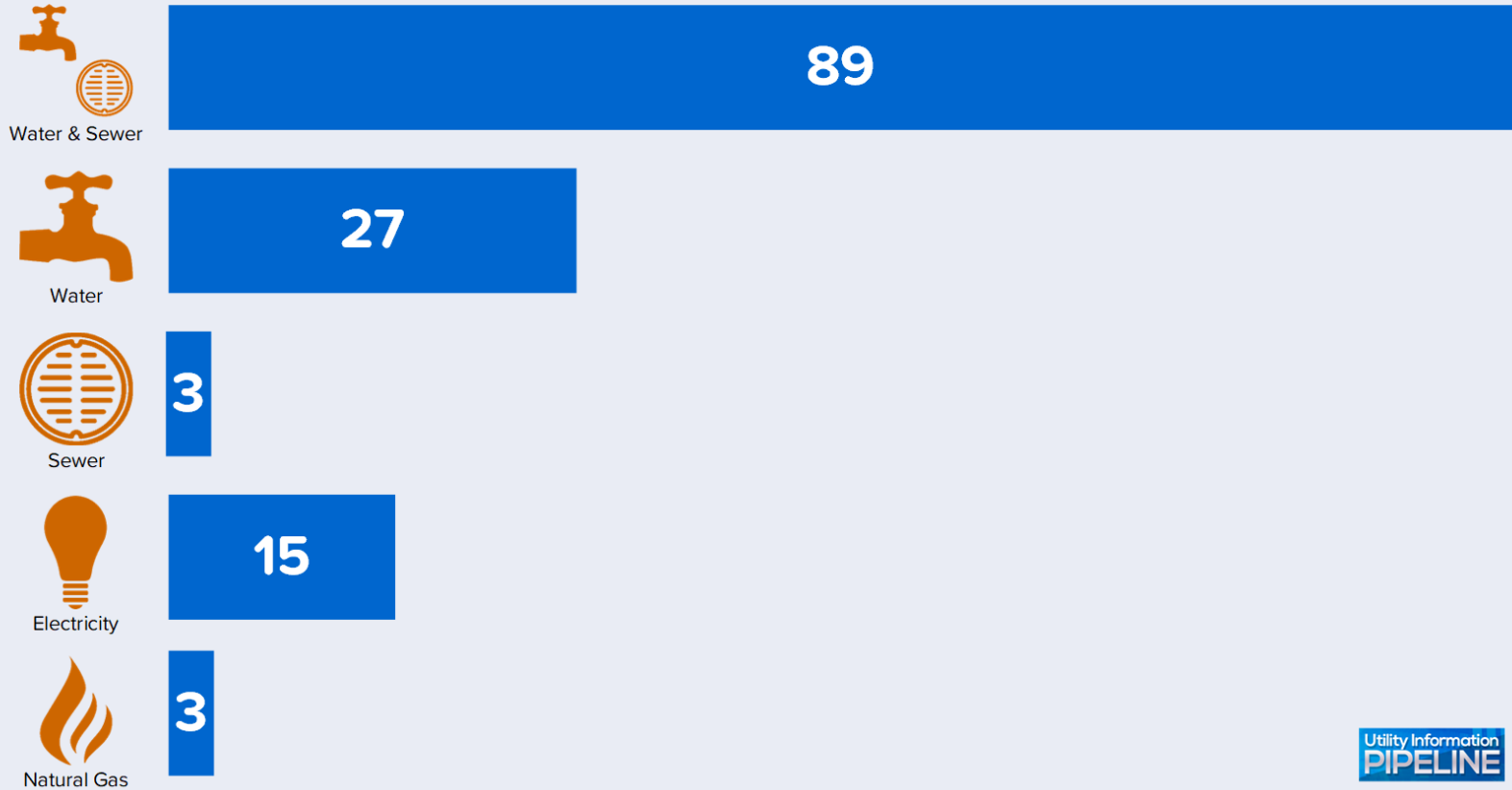
Positions of Respondents

Positions of Individuals Completing Survey

	Count
Finance Director/Office Manager/City Clerk	55
Customer Service Manager/Supervisor	20
Billing Staff	16
General Manager/Manager/Owner	12
Assistant Finance Director/Assistant Office Manager	8
Utility Director/Superintendent	6
Assistant Manager/Vice President	3
Assistant Customer Service Manager/Supervisor	1
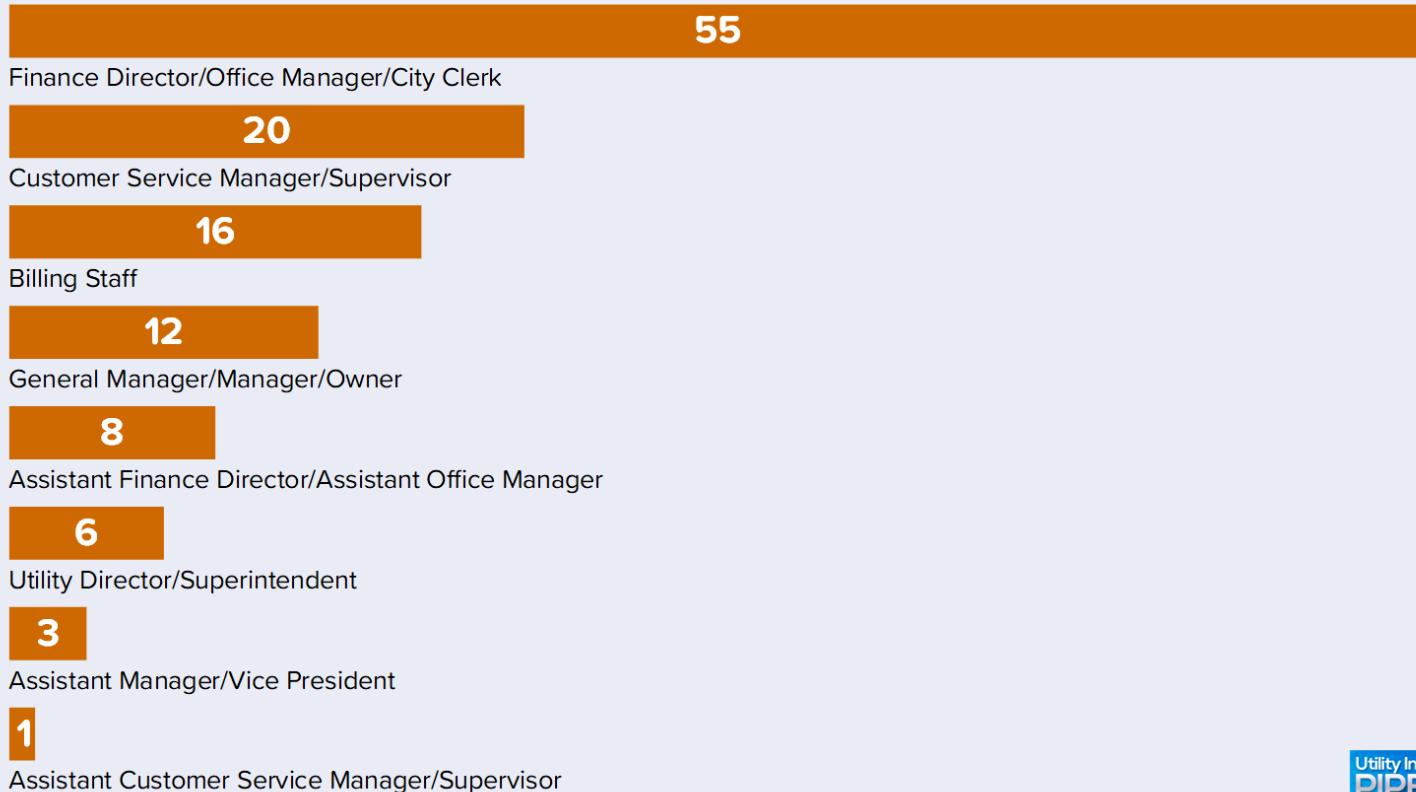
Staffing Level Calculator

Please refer to the handout or use the staffing level calculator on my website:

https://utilityinformationpipeline.com/staffing-level-calculator/

Staffing Level Calculator - Accounts

Description	Number of Accounts Billed	Factor	Annual Accounts Billed
Number of Accounts Billed Monthly		12	
Number of Accounts Billed Bi-monthly		6	
Number of Accounts Billed Quarterly		4	
Number of Accounts Billed Semi-annually		2	
Number of Accounts Billed Annually		1	
Total Annual Accounts Billed			

Staffing Level Calculator - Employees

Position	Number of Full-Time Equivalents
Supervisors/Management	
Cashiers	
Customer Service	
Cashiers/Customer Service	
Billing	
Total Office Employees	

Annual Accounts Billed/Employee

Total Annual Accounts Billed / Total Office Employees	
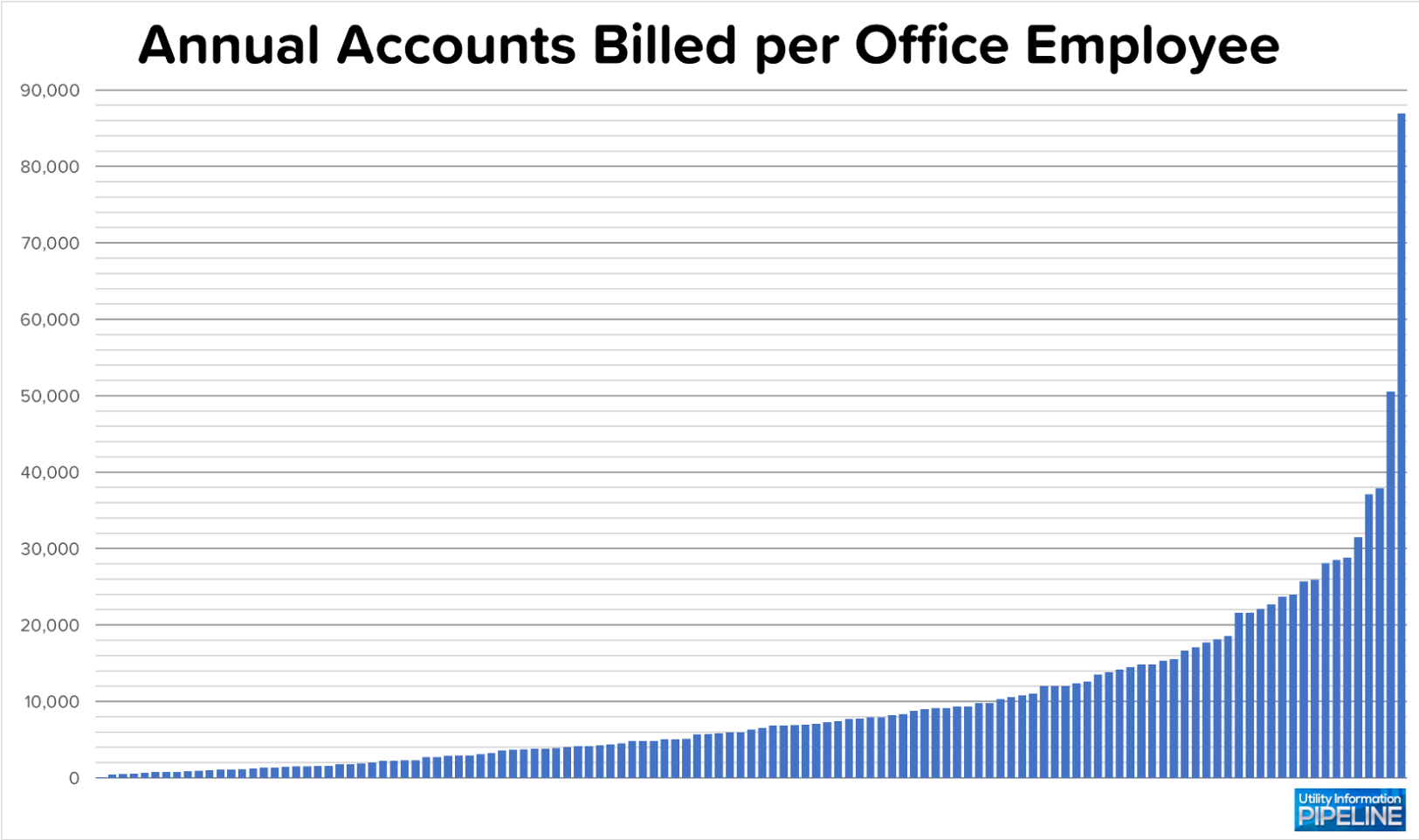
# Annual Accounts Billed/Employee

Annual Accounts Billed per Office Employee

Annual Accounts Billed/Employee

Number of Accounts	Count	Annual Accounts Billed per Office Employee			
		Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
2,500 or less	46	96	15,336	3,350	2,106
2,501 to 5,000	29	824	22,080	7,589	4,800
5,001 to 7,500	14	3,617	21,600	11,184	10,704
7,501 to 10,000	9	3,200	25,920	11,029	7,385
10,001 to 20,000	14	6,000	37,091	16,841	13,429
20,001 to 40,000	6	12,000	50,571	25,548	24,208
Over 40,000	3	31,475	86,944	52,105	37,895

Annual Accounts Billed with Turnover

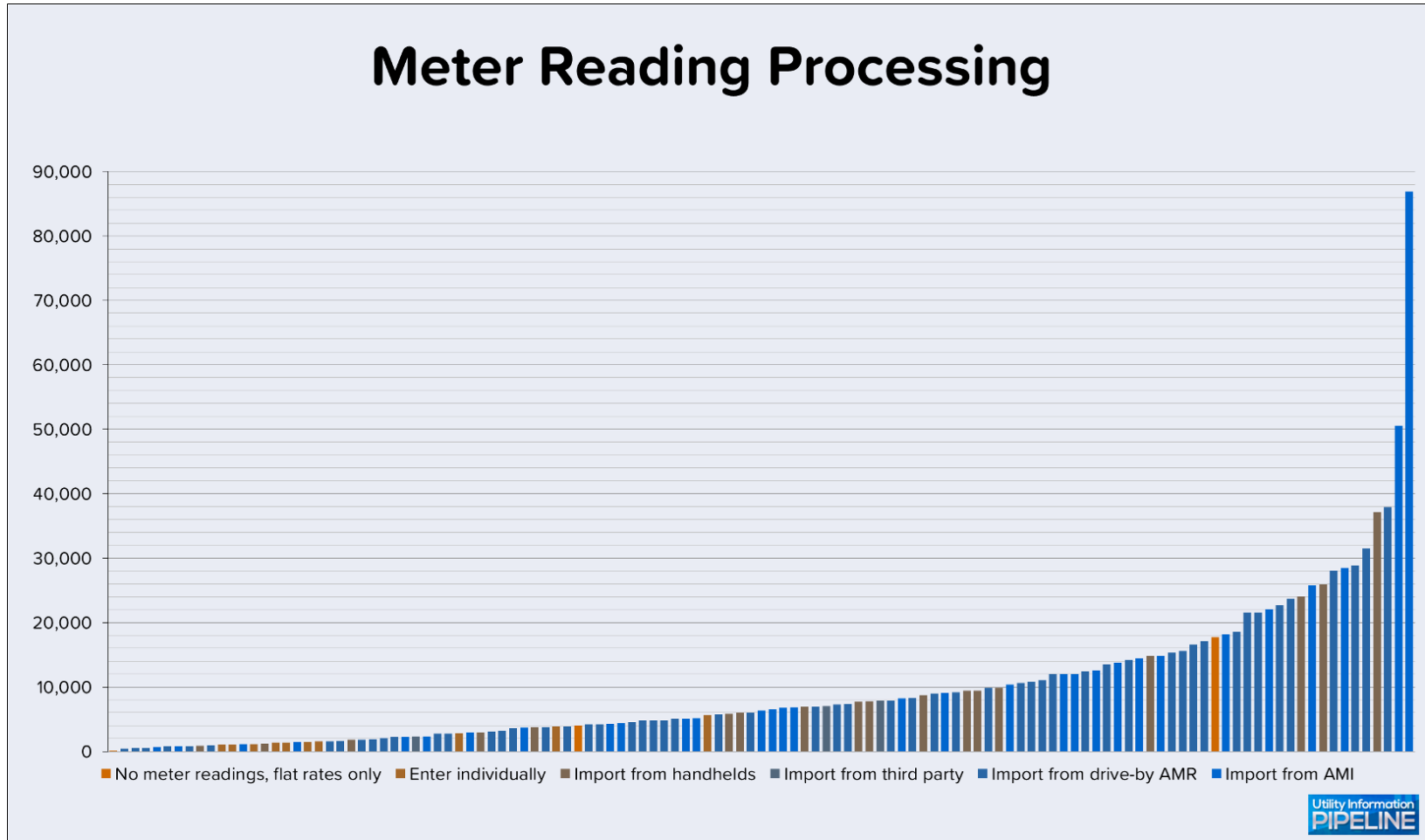Annual Accounts Billed per Office Employee with Account Turnover Rate
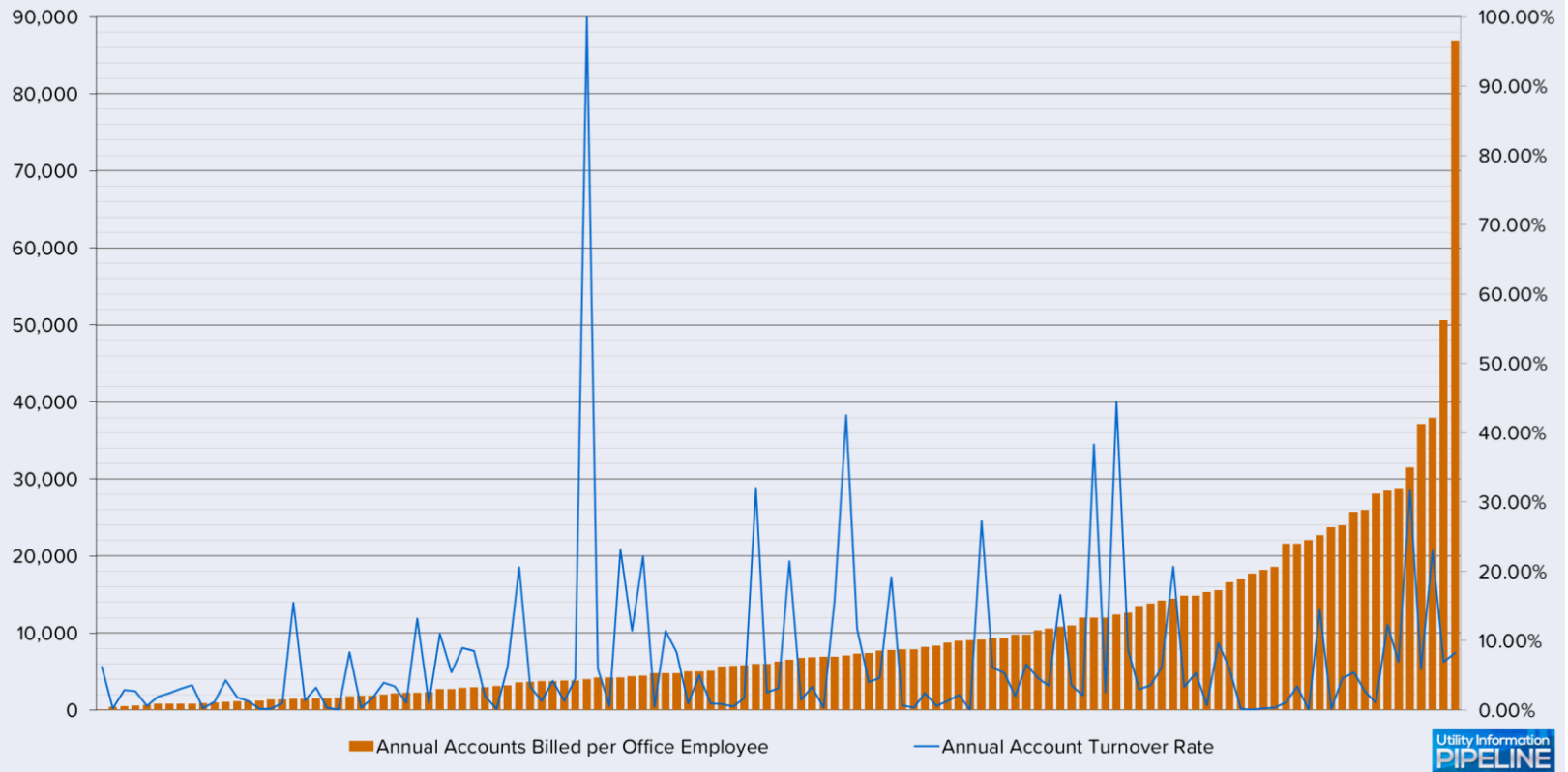
Annual Accounts Billed by Service

Annual Accounts Billed per Office Employee by Major Services Billed
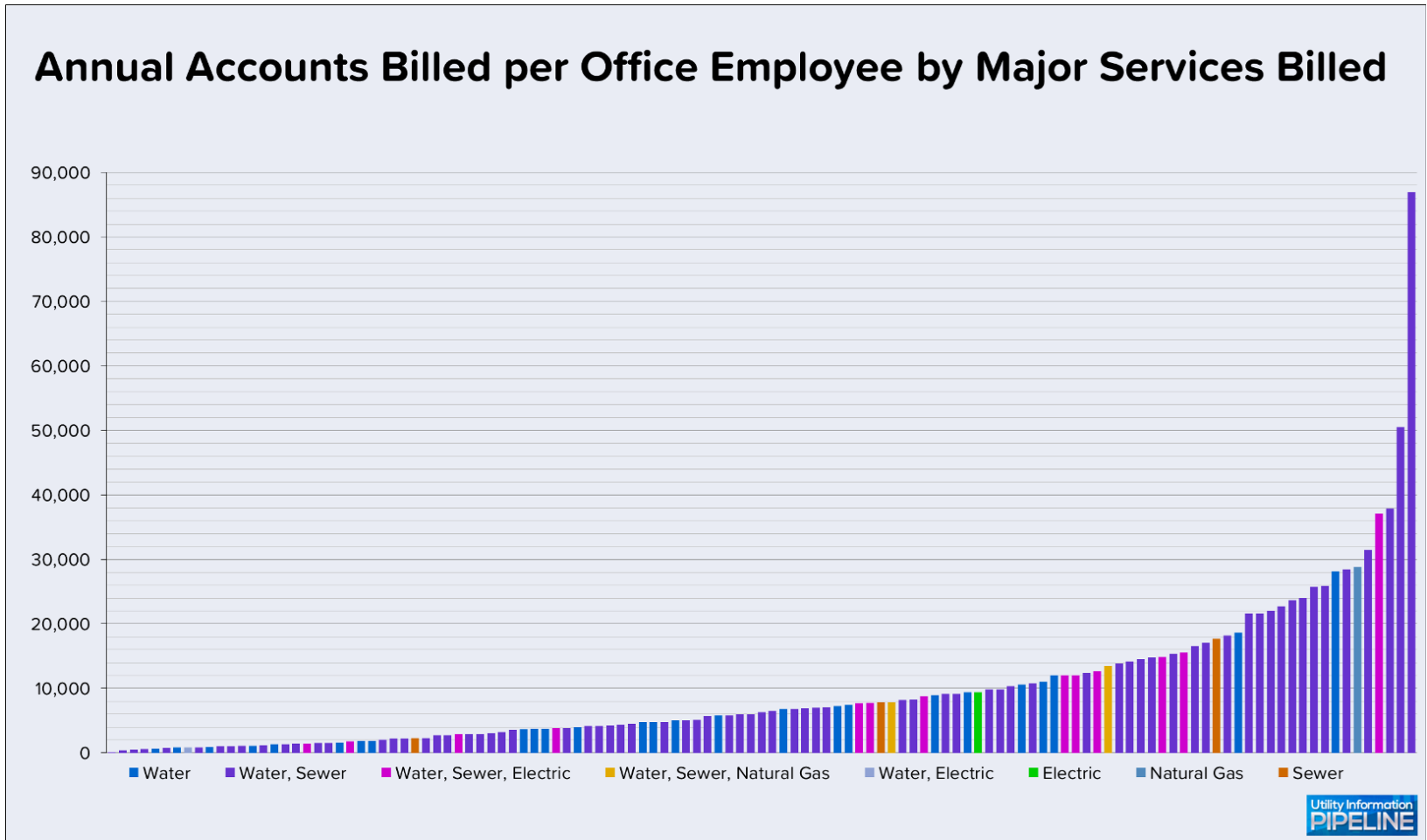
Staffing Survey Functional Areas

Meter Reading Processing

Meter Reading Processing

Meter Reading Processing

Import from drive-by AMR	56	46.28%
Import from AMI	31	25.62%
Import from handhelds	18	14.88%
Enter individually	10	8.26%
No meter readings, flat rates only	3	2.48%
Import from third party	3	2.48%

Bill Printing

Bill Printing

Legend: In-house/No Sorting, In-house/Sort by Zip Code, In-house/CASS Presort, Outsourced
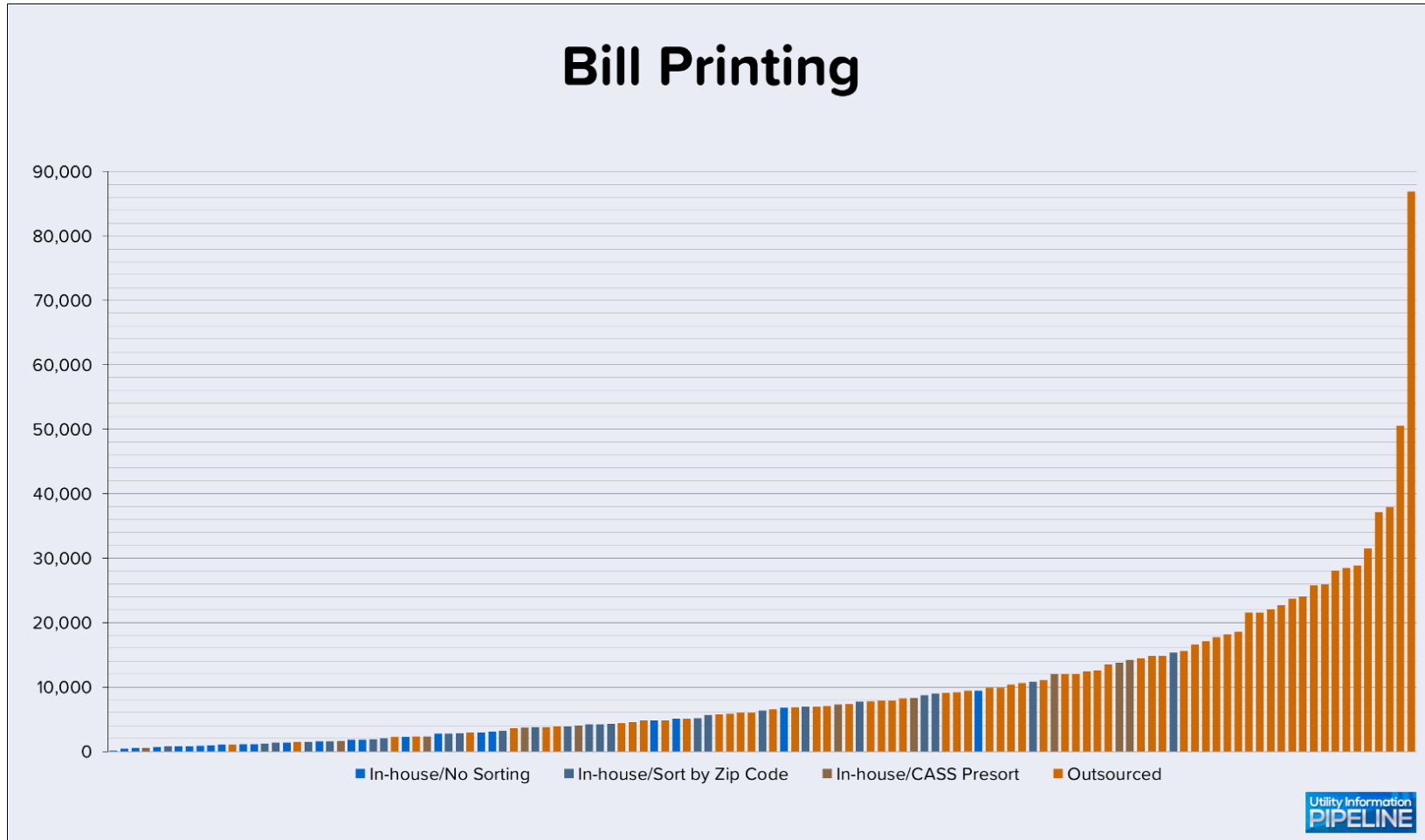
Bill Printing

Bill Printing

Outsourced	64	52.89%
In-house/Sort by Zip Code	24	19.83%
In-house/No Sorting	23	19.01%
In-house/CASS Presort	10	8.26%

Mail Payment Processing

Mail Payment Processing

Legend: Enter Keying Each Payment · Enter Scanning a Barcode · Remittance Processing System · Bank or Third-Party Lockbox
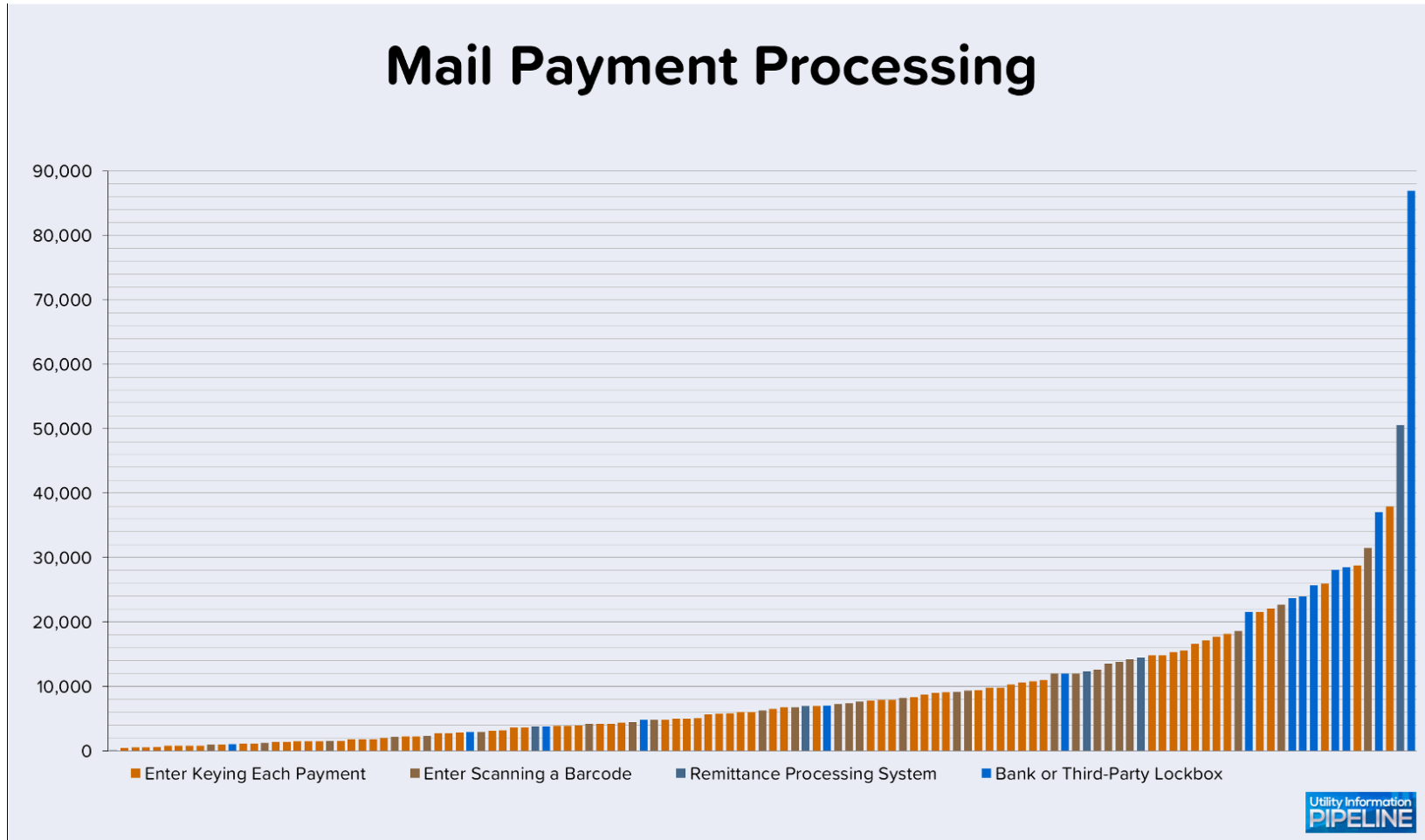
Mail Payment Processing

Mail Payment Processing

Enter Keying Each Payment	76	62.81%
Enter Scanning a Barcode	26	21.49%
Bank or Third-Party Lockbox	14	11.57%
Remittance Processing System	5	4.13%

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Phone Credit Card Payments
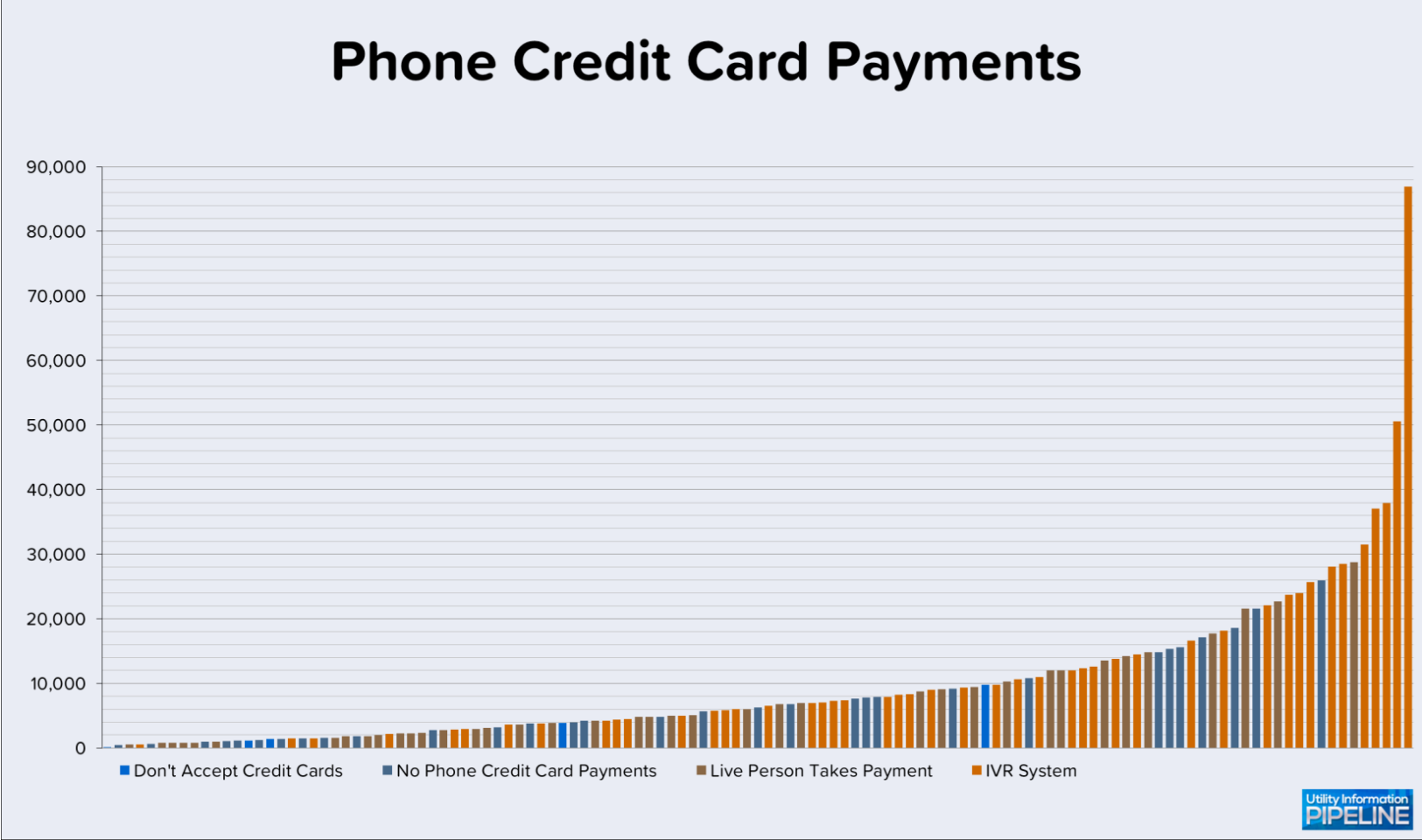
Phone Credit Card Payments

Phone Credit Card Payments

IVR System	**47**	**38.84%**
Live Person Takes Payment	**39**	**32.23%**
No Phone Credit Card Payments	**31**	**25.62%**
Don't Accept Credit Cards	**4**	**3.31%**

Service Order Processing
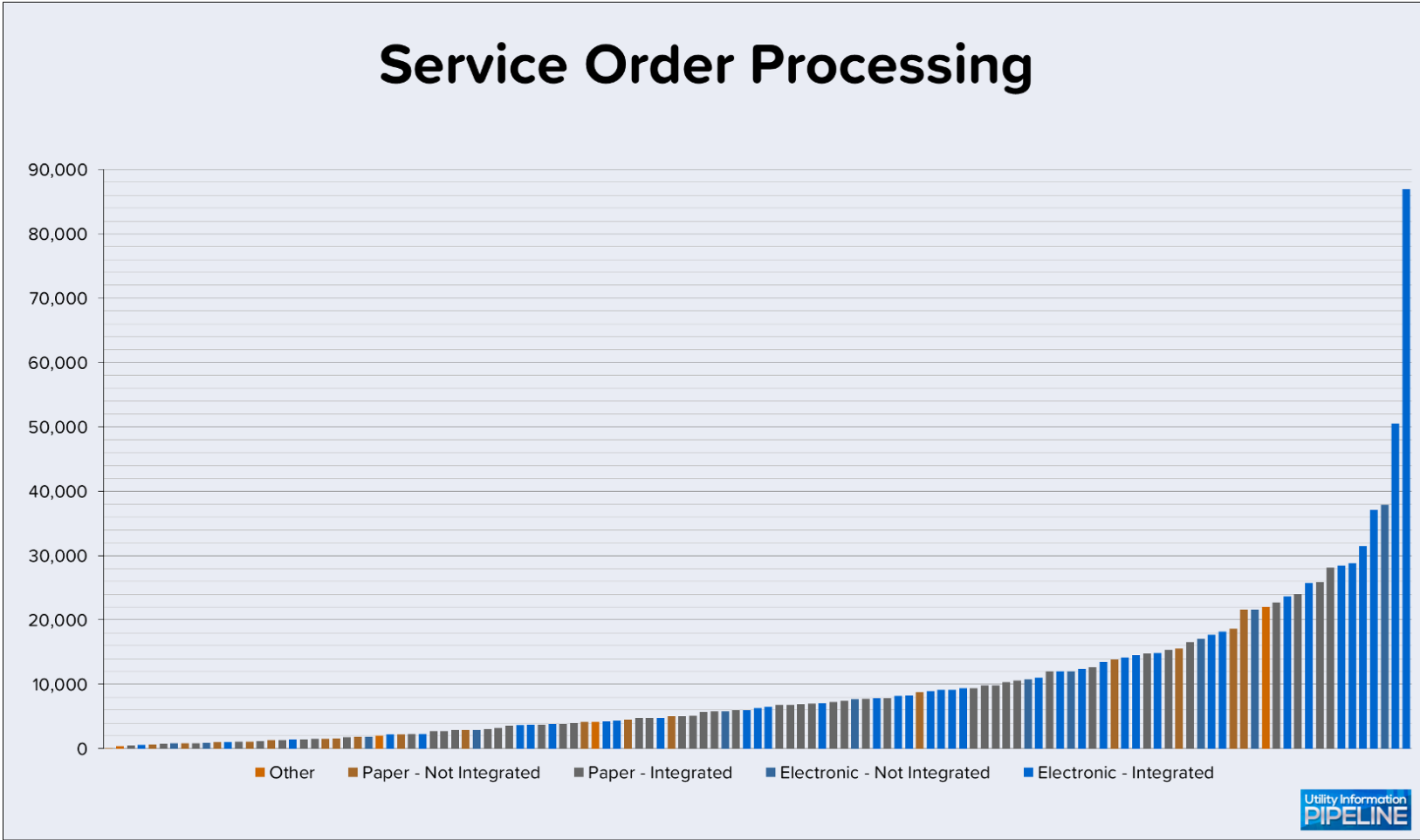
Service Order Processing

Service Order Processing

Paper - Integrated	48	39.67%
Electronic - Integrated	39	32.23%
Paper - Not Integrated	19	15.70%
Electronic - Not Integrated	11	9.09%
Other (responses below)	4	3.31%

Text or phone call to the Water Operator

Text from office with paper copy next day

Electronic with meter reading software

Phone/Email

Utility Information
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Conclusions

Conclusions

➢ Easier for offices serving more accounts to be more efficiently staffed

➢ Billing for more than one metered service requires more staff

➢ More efficiently staffed offices outsource bill printing

➢ Automating mail payments improves efficiency

➢ Surprisingly, a number of efficiently staffed offices take phone credit card payments in person

Questions?
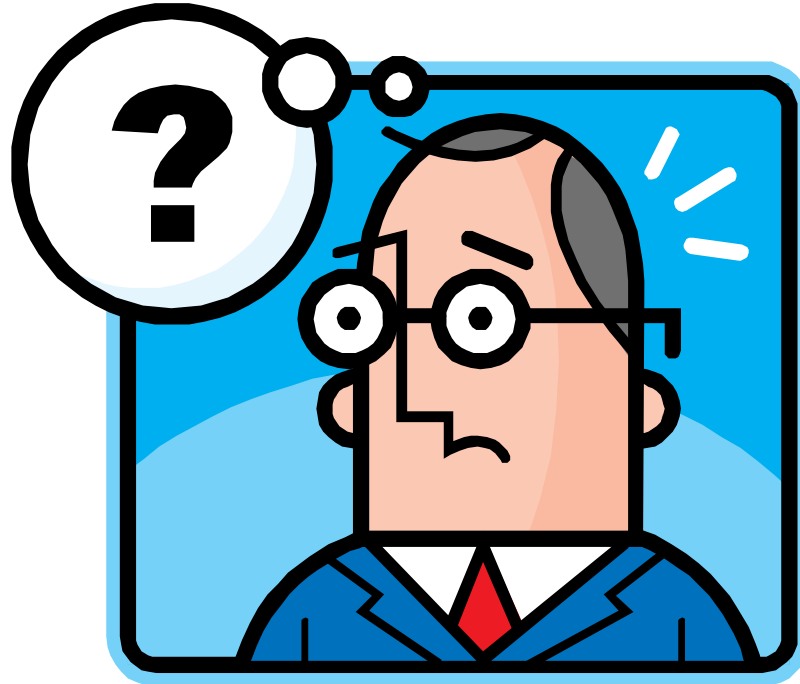
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