



Exploring the Characteristics of Low-Income Households With the Highest Energy Burdens: One Size Does Not Fit All

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High Energy Burden

$$\text{Energy burden} = \frac{\text{Household energy costs}}{\text{Household income}}$$

On average (for high burden) this looks like...

$$13.5\% = \frac{\$1,698}{\$15,336}$$

So what do we know about these high burden households?



High Burden Customers

And ... what can we gain from learning about high burden households?

- What are they *willing* to do to lower energy usage?
- What are they *already* doing to lower energy usage?
- What can energy efficiency programs do to help them with that pesky numerator?

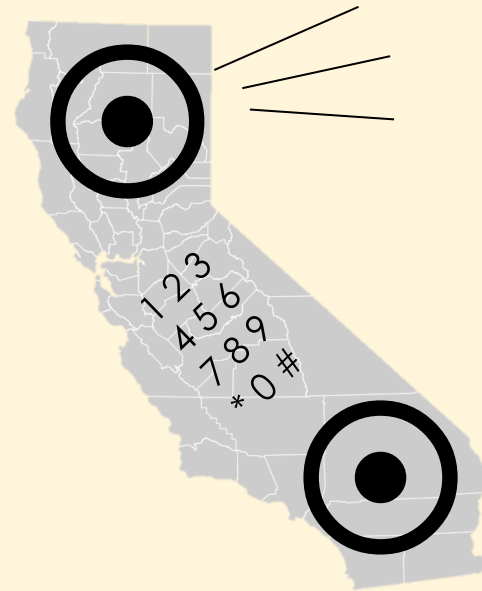


Methodology

4 focus groups



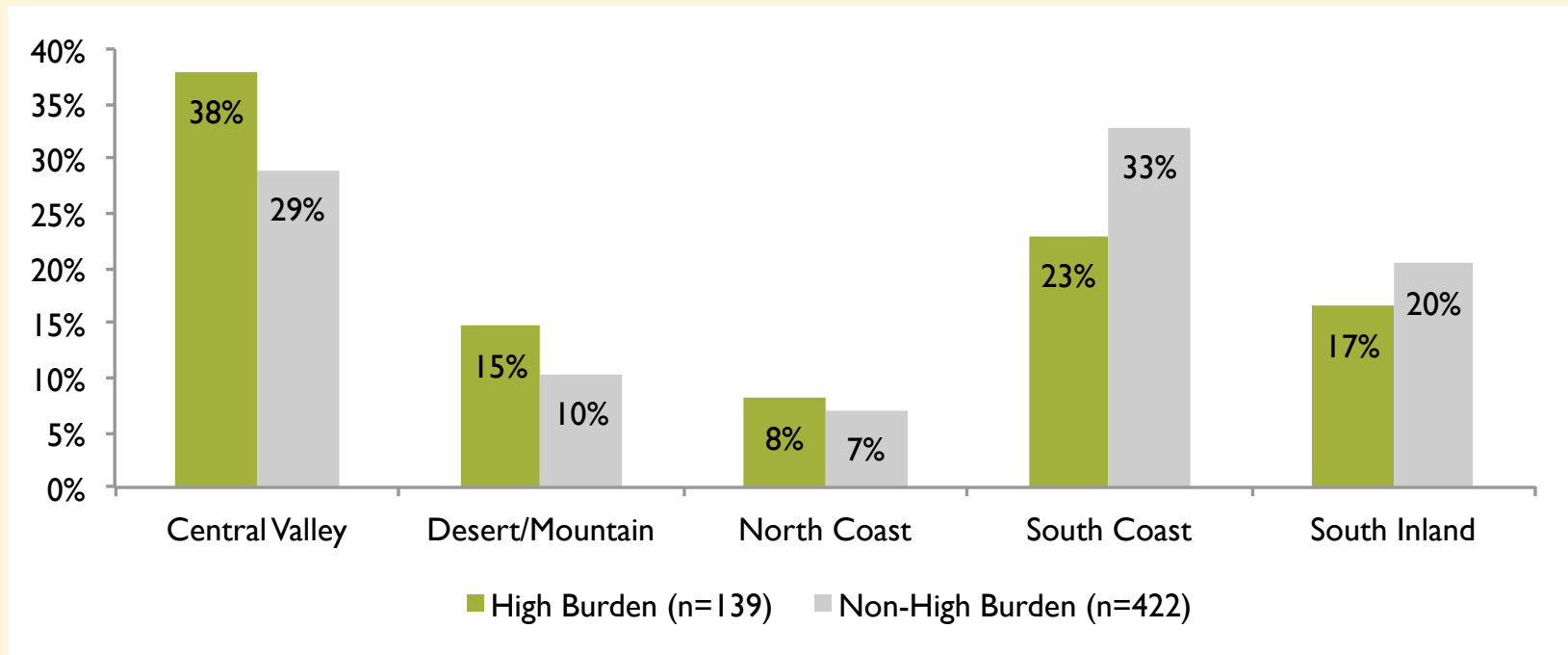
905 Telephone surveys





Methodology

Energy Burden Levels by Climate Region





What We'll Cover

- **What and how people manage**
- **Where households draw the line**
- **Identifying misconceptions**
- **Design it yourself**



What and How People Manage

Bill prioritization:

- ✉ rent/mortgage ✉ auto
- ✉ energy
- ✉ cable ✉ internet ✉ phone

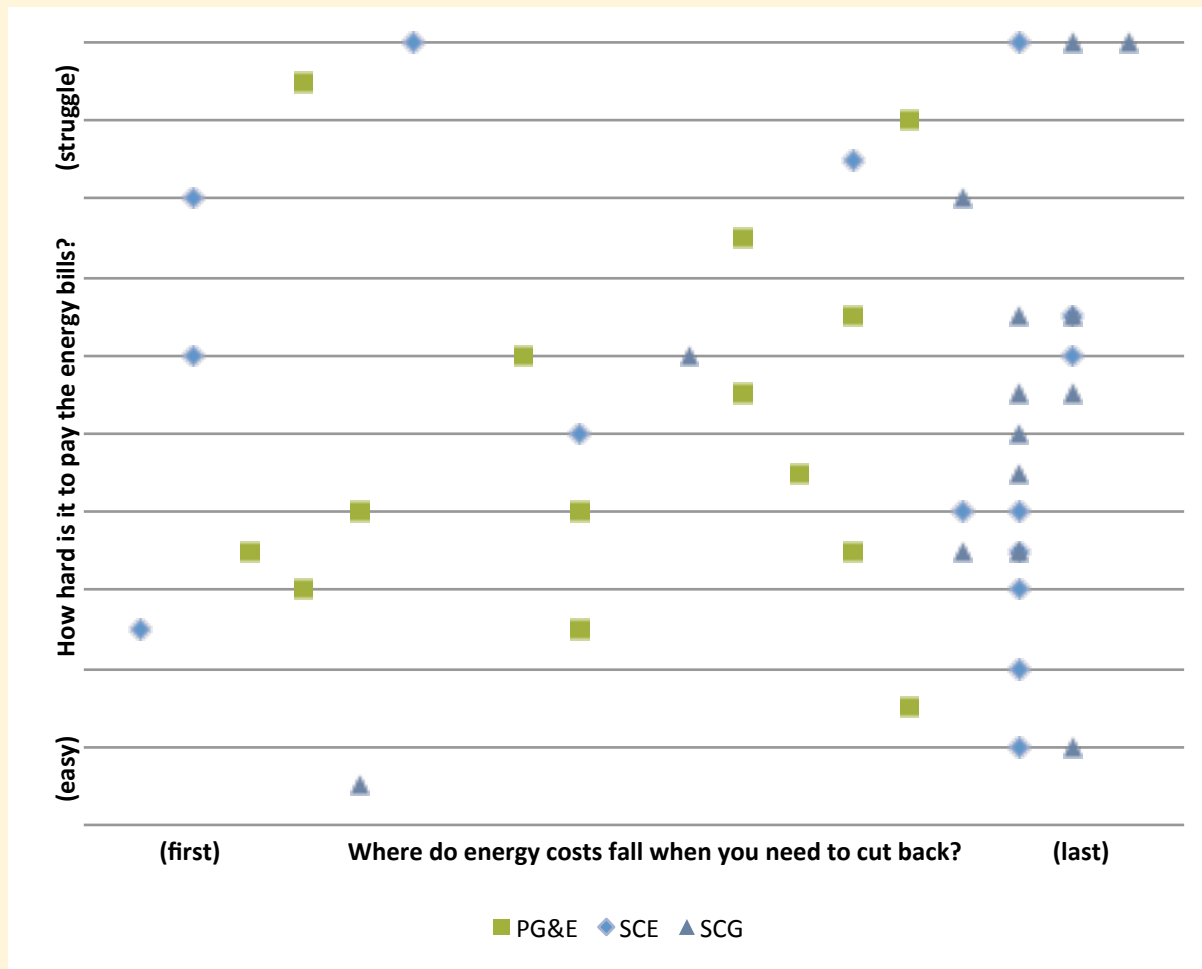
Tool kit:

- 🔧 Salvation Army
- 🔧 Medical Baseline
- 🔧 Payment plans, extensions



What and How People Manage, cont.

Difficulty Paying Bills and Priority on Energy Bills When Needing to Cut Back (Focus Groups, n=29)





Drawing a Line

Always, sometimes or never:

- Turn off lights
- At night or when not home:
 - Turn down or off heat
 - Turn down AC
- Turn off electronics like TVs and computers
- Shower < 5 mins



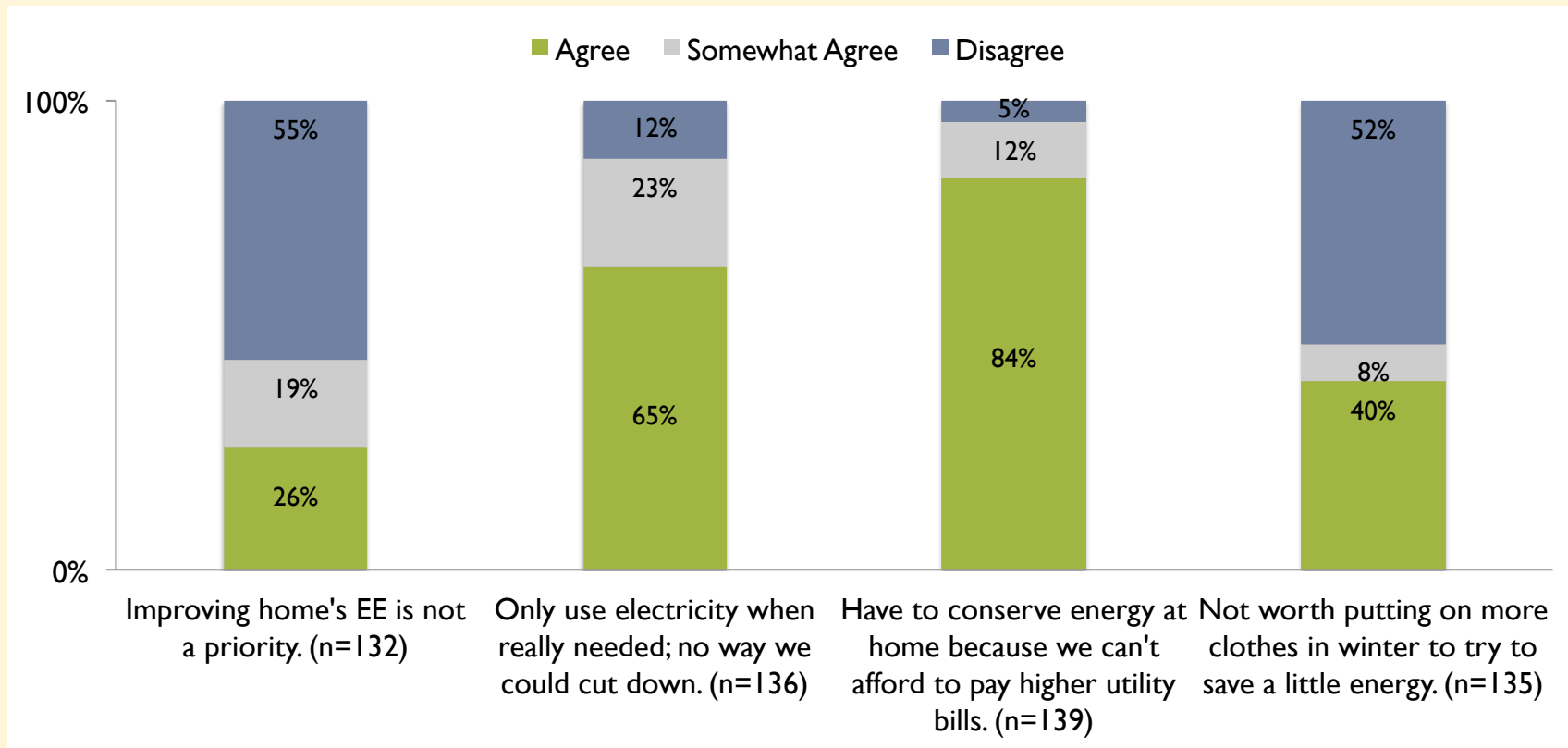
20% take **all** (or nearly all) steps

5% do **all** irregularly at best



Drawing a Line, cont.

Self-Reported Energy-Saving Attitudes and Motivations





Drawing a Line, cont.





Drawing a Line, cont.

- **Changing cooking habits to save energy or to keep the home hot or cool**
 - Baking in the winter
 - Grilling in the summer
 - Toaster instead of oven
 - Batch meals
 - Added benefit of saving money that would be spent eating out



Drawing a Line, cont.

Household Member Challenges

- *Some strive to change others*
 - Put on a sweater
 - Shut off the hot water while they're in the shower
- *Some have given up*
 - "I used to say something but... you know, that's my wife, what can I do."



Drawing a Line, cont.

AC to me is important but the way I see things is I don't drink, smoke,... I try not to eat out... I save in other stuff... But AC to me, I like that.

I'm sure everyone could unplug everything but realistically none of us are going to come back home and plug it all in.

If I don't use the AC then I can't sleep.

If it is too hot, you want to turn the air on and if it is hot everyone gets grouchy, you don't want everyone like that.

I don't make a lot of money and I don't see where we could cut back. I'm not willing to be miserably hot and I need to wash my clothes."



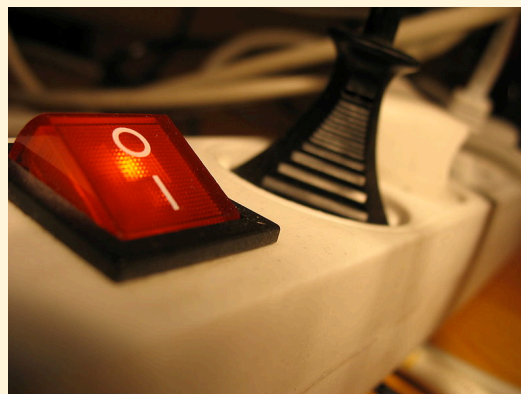
Drawing a Line, cont.

Or the line is drawn for you: medical need.

- Disabilities may require additional heating and cooling
- Heat from oxygen tank
- Tolerance for temperature tends to be reduced for young children and older adults



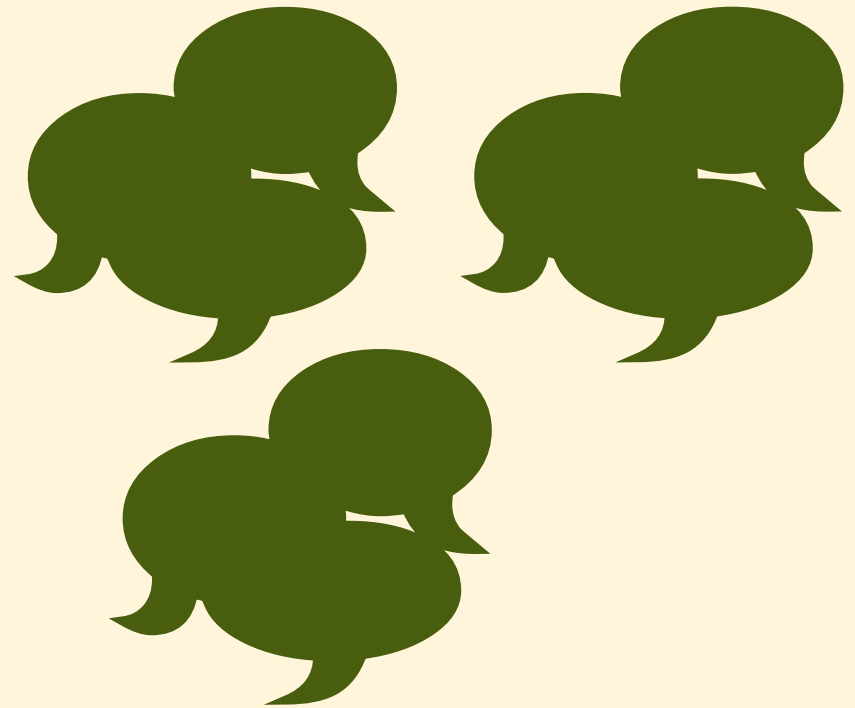
Identifying Misconceptions





Identifying Misconceptions

Word of Mouth





Design it Yourself

Handing the participants the reins:

- Usage alerts
- Additional education
- Solar
- Advertisement locations



Engaging Low Income Customers

- **Juggling different financial responsibilities**
- **Different reasons for high usage**
- **Interest in and need for customized energy education**
- **Usage alerts may be helpful tool**
- **Ongoing engagement valued**



Questions and Feedback

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Check out our new website:
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