

Public Beliefs, Behaviors and Preferences about Energy, 2014

Communication Considerations

1. Talk to Marylanders about how to sign up for renewable electricity

Most Marylanders (54%) are willing to spend more on their energy bills each month for renewably sourced electricity, but the vast majority of Marylanders (64%) say they currently are not participating in these types of programs, or don't know whether they are (23%). Providing lists of firms that offer higher percentages of renewable energy, especially from local sources, may be one way to reduce some of the barriers to participation. (When possible, recommending one "approved" electricity supplier, as some Maryland organizations have done, may make participation decisions even easier for Marylanders.)

2. Promote microgeneration of renewable energy, such as with solar leasing plans

In 2014, as in 2013, more than half of Marylanders say that they would like the state to use more renewable fuel sources to generate electricity. The source of renewable electricity most favored by Marylanders for further development is solar (78%). At the same time, it is becoming increasingly easier for residents to install solar panels through leasing programs.

3. Help Marylanders understand that coal powers their homes

Half of Marylanders say that they want less coal used for electrical energy generation, the predominant source of electrical energy in the state, but about the same percentage say that they want less petroleum (oil) used as well, even though only 1% of electricity nationally is fueled by oil. Marylanders are much more likely to say that coal is very harmful to people's health than petroleum (41% vs. 26%), which makes it important that they understand the true source of their electricity in their homes.

4. Link water conservation with energy conservation

Marylanders are less likely to understand that home water heating is the second largest source of energy consumption in their home after space heating. Using less hot water by purchasing low flow showerheads and efficient appliances (dishwashers and washing machines), saves water and also saves energy, lowering monthly electricity bills.

5. Consider new models for promoting energy efficiency and conservation, such as neighborhood-based outreach

Few Marylanders say that they have had an energy audit in the past five years (15%), and even fewer are interested in spending \$100 within the next year to have one done (10%), even though audits are frequently seen as an important entryway to home energy retrofits. Retrofit and energy audit costs are cited most frequently as being barriers to participating in an audit, followed by informational barriers. These same barriers have been reported in a study of home energy audit contractors. Consider changes in promotion for energy efficiency and conservation programs including community- and neighborhood-based models, like the Baltimore Energy Challenge and the state's new EmPOWER outreach efforts.