



Beyond Awareness: An In-Depth Look at Participation Barriers

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November 2, 2022

Massachusetts Policy Context



Statewide programs offered through Mass Save and funded by the Massachusetts electric and gas Program Administrators

Three-year energy efficiency planning cycle, the most recent 2022 – 2024

Concerted focus on equitable service and community engagement in previous engagement efforts as well as their current 3-year plan

Background

In 2019, Massachusetts Program Administrators and Energy Efficiency Advisory Council (EEAC) consultants enlisted EM&Vteam (ILLUME, Cadeo and Guidehouse) to better understand residential customers that have not participated in Mass Save programs.

The study had three objectives with a focus on renters, moderate income, and non-English speaking customers:





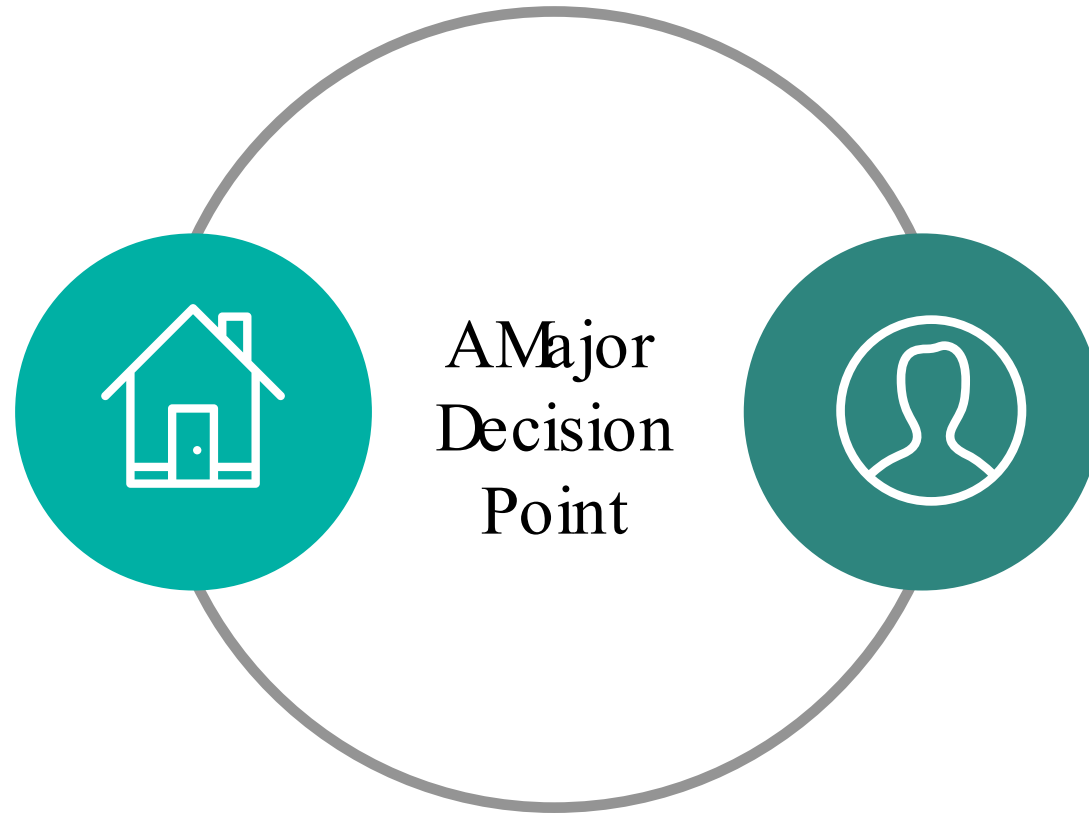
METHODOLOGY

Defining Participation

There's more than one way to look at it

Locational or Building Level

Addresses / buildings that received services, direct installations, and / or rebates through Mass Save between 2013 – 2017. Excludes Behavioral and Upstream Store Lighting sales data.



Individual Level

Respondents' self-report of participation in a Mass Save program in current or prior home, no time boundaries.

Study Methodology

Exceptionally rigorous approach integrating quantitative
and in-depth qualitative research

1609

Customer
Surveys

Multi-mode web,
telephone, mail, and
door-to-door

89

Customer
Interviews

In-person and
telephone

19

Property Manager
Surveys &
Interviews

Follow-up interviews
built on surveys

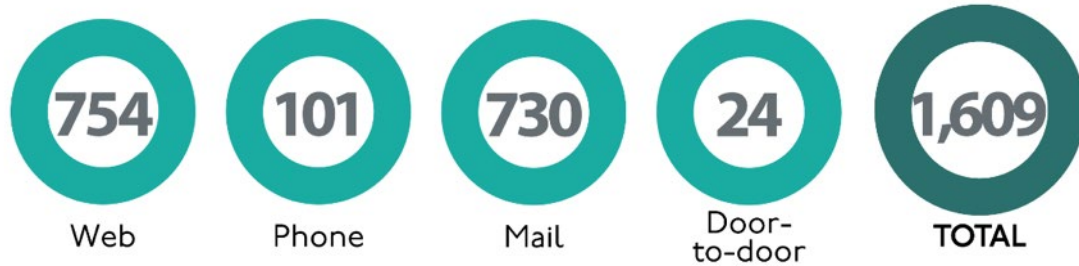
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PA Staff and
Community
Organizations

Community organizations
targeted specific
groups of interest

Deconstructing the Research

Quantitative Surveys



Paired with Qualitative Insights



Inclusive of...

Languages for all materials

English

Spanish

Portuguese

Chinese (Mandarin)

Various Touchpoints

Invitation Letters and Emails

Reminder Letters and Emails

Leave Behind Postcards

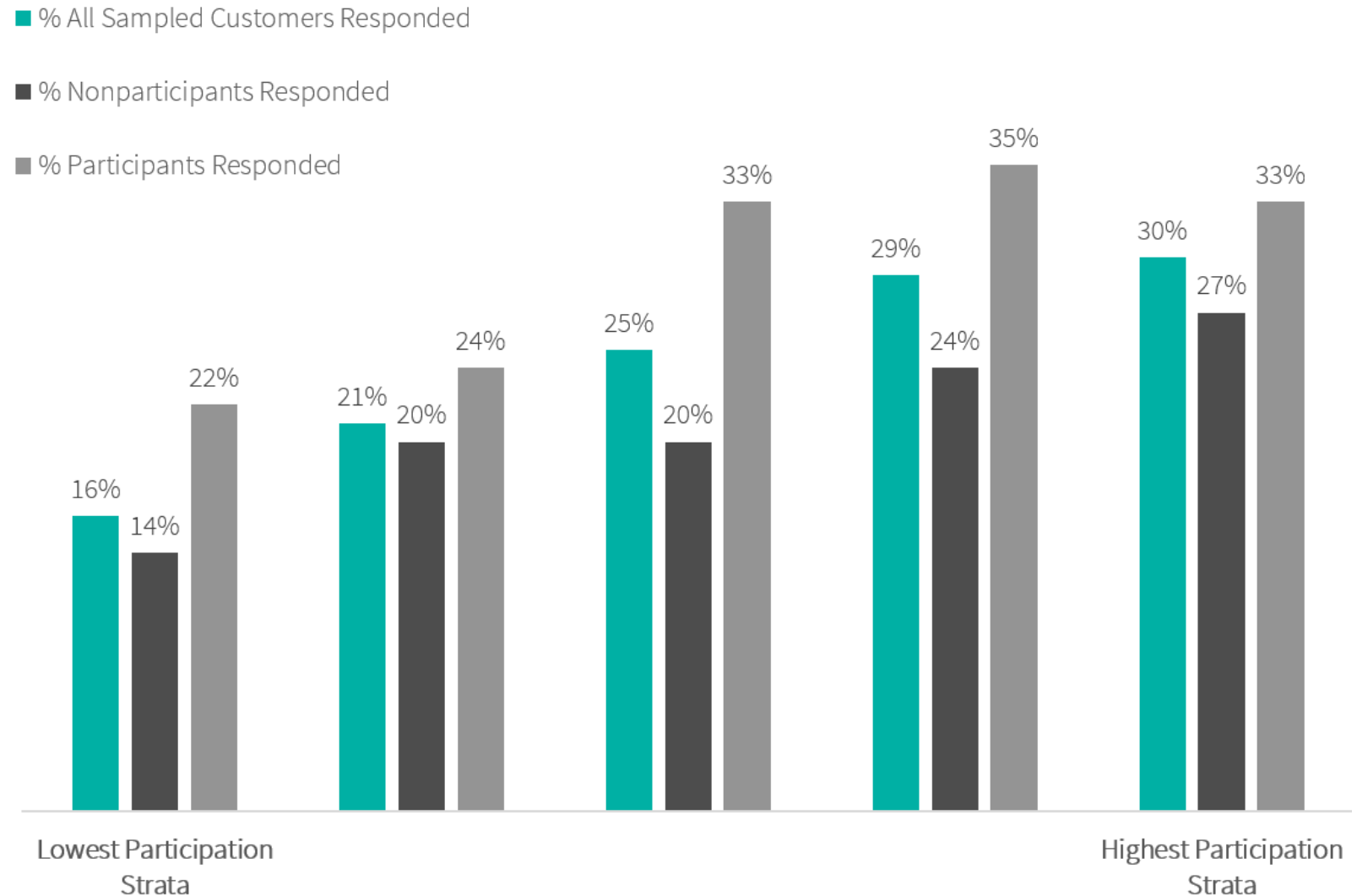
Incentives

\$20 Visa Gift Card

\$5 In Mail Survey Package

Responsiveness: A Finding in and of Itself

The study achieved a **24%** response rate with far lower response from nonparticipants





BARRIERS: THE BIG THEMES

Overview of Themes

The research identified four barrier themes; however, it is important to note that these barriers are inextricably connected

1. **(Dis)trust:** Trust, or lack thereof, in program legitimacy and offerors was prevalent among all groups this study investigated
2. **Knowledge:** A lack of knowledge and understanding of the programs and energy efficiency benefits stood in the way of participation
3. **Relevance:** Customer participation was inhibited by a sense that the program was not relevant to them
4. **Prioritization:** Energy efficiency only becomes a priority when basic needs are met



Distrust

Concern for Livelihoods and Distrust of Motives

“When we came to the US, my husband told me never to share any information because it could be used against us in the future. Have you seen the new policies the current administration has implemented? He was right all along.”

—(Door to door respondent, 2019)

“We don't want to ask for any type of help with programs like that because it could be used against us later to change citizenship status.”

—(Survey respondent, 2019)

Other Areas of Distrust

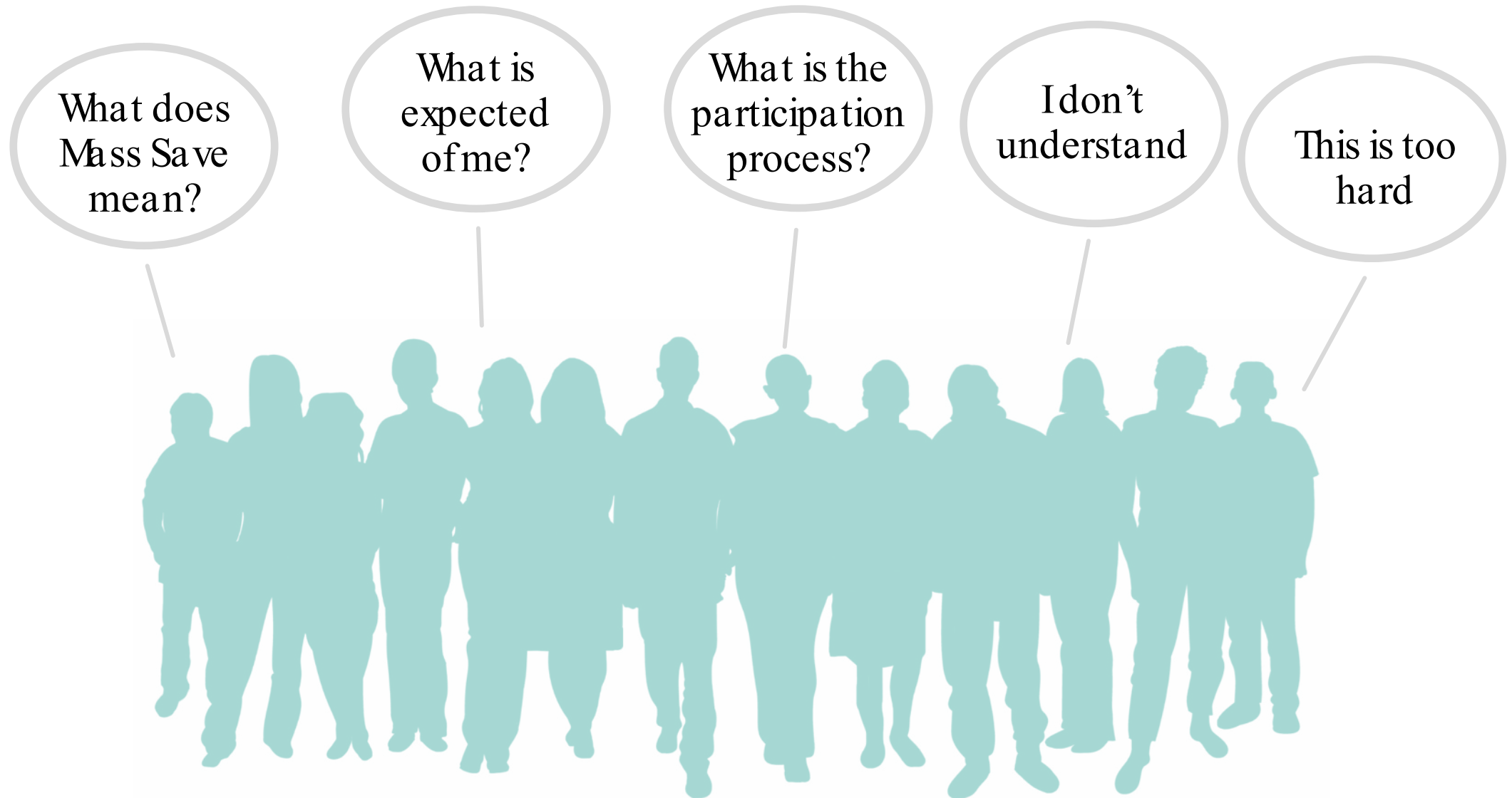
“Nothing
is free.”

“Inability to pay
bills create fear of
their utility.”

“My landlord is not
someone I want
deal with.”

“There must be an
underlying motivation
for my utility to offer
this that isn't about me.”

Knowledge: Lack of True Understanding



Relevance: This Isn't For Me

They won't understand me

These programs are for those that can't afford it, not me

Efficiency is a luxury for the wealthy, not me

I won't qualify

My home is already efficient

My landlord's responsibility not mine

I've been rejected before

Prioritization

There are more important things in life



Real Life

Themes are Neatly Arranged; Life Isn't

Ana shared her challenges, saying. “[It’s November and] they just turned my mother’s gas off...And we have children in my home.”

She explained that they owed \$117 on the bill and had paid \$90 but could not pay the bill in full. She was distraught that the gas had been turned off just at the beginning of winter, and worried for her children. Although she was interested to hear about program offerings, all of them seemed irrelevant compared to her urgent need to have her gas turned on again. Instead, access to heat was her primary concern.



Ana:
Disconnected,
surprised and
concerned

(Barriers: relevance, prioritization and trust)

Taking These Findings into 2022 - 2024

The MAPAs are directly integrating, and expanding on, this research

Partnerships

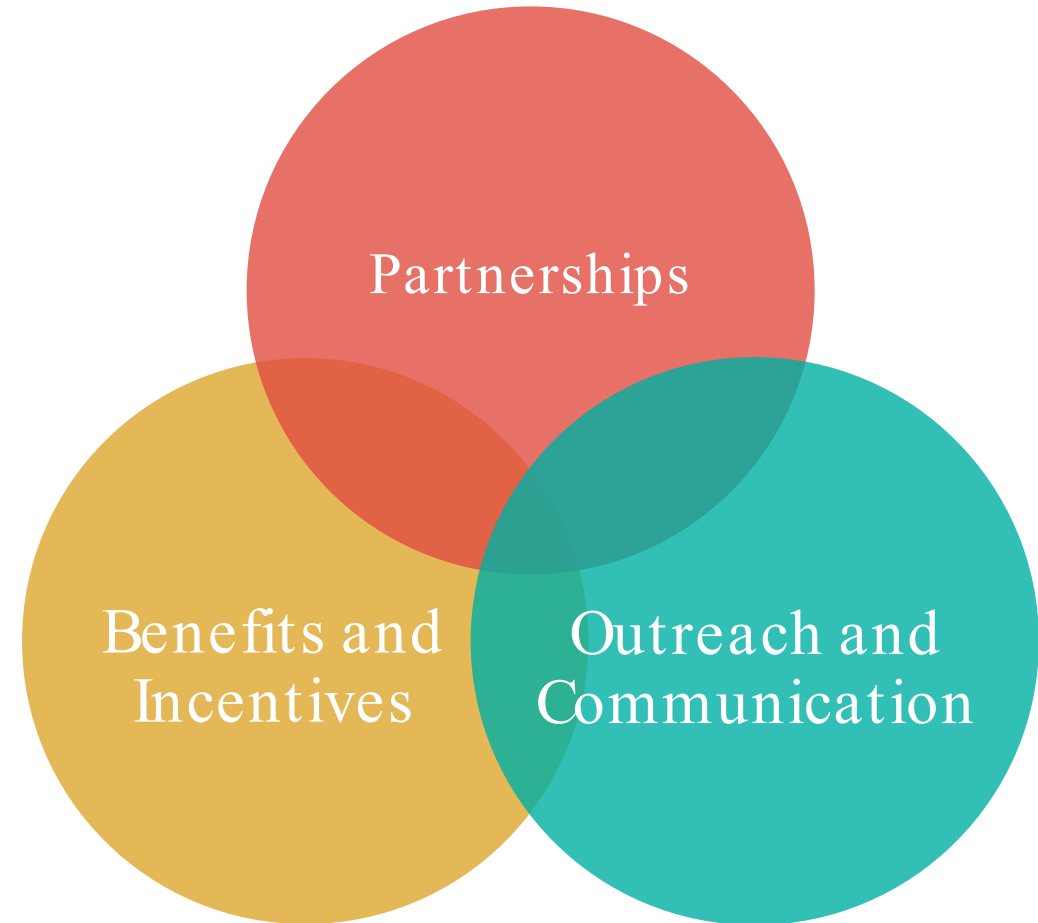
Improved municipal and community partnerships

Benefits and Incentives

Enhanced incentives for moderate-income customers

Outreach and Communication

Targeted programming to communities
Addressing language barriers (language access plan)
Increased outreach to renters



Not Sitting on a Shelf

Drawing from Study to Define Goals, Barriers, and Tactics for Initiatives

EQUITY: Moderate Income

Goals

- Increase the number of moderate-income customers participating in energy efficiency programs.
- Introduce new incentives that make energy efficiency upgrades more affordable for moderate-income customers.
- Create greater ease of access to weatherization and HVAC incentives for moderate-income customers.
- Streamline the verification process to income qualify for enhanced incentives.

| Barriers | Example Tactics | Applicable Initiative(s) | Short, Mid, Long-Term |
|--|--|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| • Customer awareness of services and incentives | Continue to offer 100% weatherization incentive for moderate-income customers, and make adjustments as necessary | RCD | S |
| • Customer understanding of priority and relevance | Offer new enhanced incentive on HVAC equipment for moderate-income customers and in conjunction provide information about the HEAT Loan to cover the balance. Each PA may target geographic areas for the enhanced incentive | Retail | S |
| | Streamline the moderate-income verification process, offering verification options that minimize customer effort, based on which verification options are applicable to the customer | RCD | S |

Limited English Proficiency Customers

A deeper dive

Language isolated and limited English proficiency customers were the most challenging to engage for this study. The PAs enlisted a targeted study to better understand how to best address the needs of these customers. Target languages are:

- Spanish
- Portuguese
- Chinese (Mandarin)
- Haitian Creole

Research is ongoing, expected to be complete in 2023; but the research has brought forward the intentionality needed to better service those for whom English isn't a primary language, and especially those who do not speak English at all.

Questions?



Contact

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