

Electricity and Natural Gas Consumption Analysis: NCLC Methodology and Results

National Consumer Law Center (NCLC) generated electricity usage tables and graphs using microdata from the U.S. Department of Energy, Energy Information Administration 2009 Residential Energy Consumption Survey (RECS). The 2009 RECS includes detailed residential energy consumption and expenditure information from 27 U.S. geographic areas referred to as “reportable domains.” Some reportable domains reflect data from a single state while others are comprised of multiple, adjoining states.

The RECS survey instrument includes questions regarding a broad range of demographic factors and household characteristics. Using SPSS statistical software NCLC tabulated RECS consumption and demographic data by reportable domain to generate the tables and graphs of kilowatt-hour usage by poverty status, household income category, race, age, and Hispanic origin.

Results of these analyses clearly demonstrate that – on average and with remarkable consistency across the U.S. – lower-income, African American, Latino, and elder-headed households use less electricity than their counterparts. Therefore, utility proposals to increase mandatory fees and charges while de-emphasizing the volumetric portion of customers’ bills penalize low-volume consumers and disproportionately harms these groups of ratepayers.