MEMO

Date: June 8, 2010
To: Management Team
From: Sarah Castor
Subject: Actual vs. reported participation in among 2009 Residential Awareness Survey respondents

Summary

Both the 2008 and 2009 Residential Awareness Surveys provided evidence of unequal participation across regions of the state. Specifically, significantly higher participation was reported in the Portland Metro area than in the other 3 defined regions.

Supplemental analysis of the 2009 respondents using data from Fast Track (matched on respondent address) reveals that not only is the actual participation much higher than reported, but participation is virtually equal across all regions except Eastern Oregon, which is only slightly lower. Participation among homeowner customer segments is also much greater than reported.

Background

The supplemental analysis was performed on 586 respondents to the 2009 survey; these respondents were both served by one of our funding utilities and could be connected to a valid address. Although more than three quarters of respondents correctly reported whether they had participated in an Energy Trust program, 18% of respondents incorrectly reported their participation status.

It should be noted that there may be legitimate reasons for discrepancies between reports and Fast Track. Respondents may not have participated, but may be living in a home where the previous occupant did participate. The converse is also true: respondents who reported that they participated, but for which no measures were found in Fast Track may have participated at a previous address. We will attempt to test this by looking at utility service activation dates where it is possible to match the address to utility account, but it is unlikely that all the incorrect responses are due to this problem.

Respondents also may not identify an experience with Energy Trust (such as a Home Energy Review) as “participation” in a program.[1] A change in the wording of this question is planned for the 2010 Residential Awareness survey to include “received a service from Energy Trust”.

Findings

While the reported rate of participation among respondents was 9%, actual participation was 19%. Participation by region and utility are displayed in Unless otherwise noted, figures include participation at any time since Energy Trust’s inception.

[1] The question about participation read “Have you ever participated in any Energy Trust program or received a rebate check from Energy Trust?”

Figure 1 and Figure 2, respectively. Unless otherwise noted, figures include participation at any time since Energy Trust's inception.

Figure 1. Participation by Region

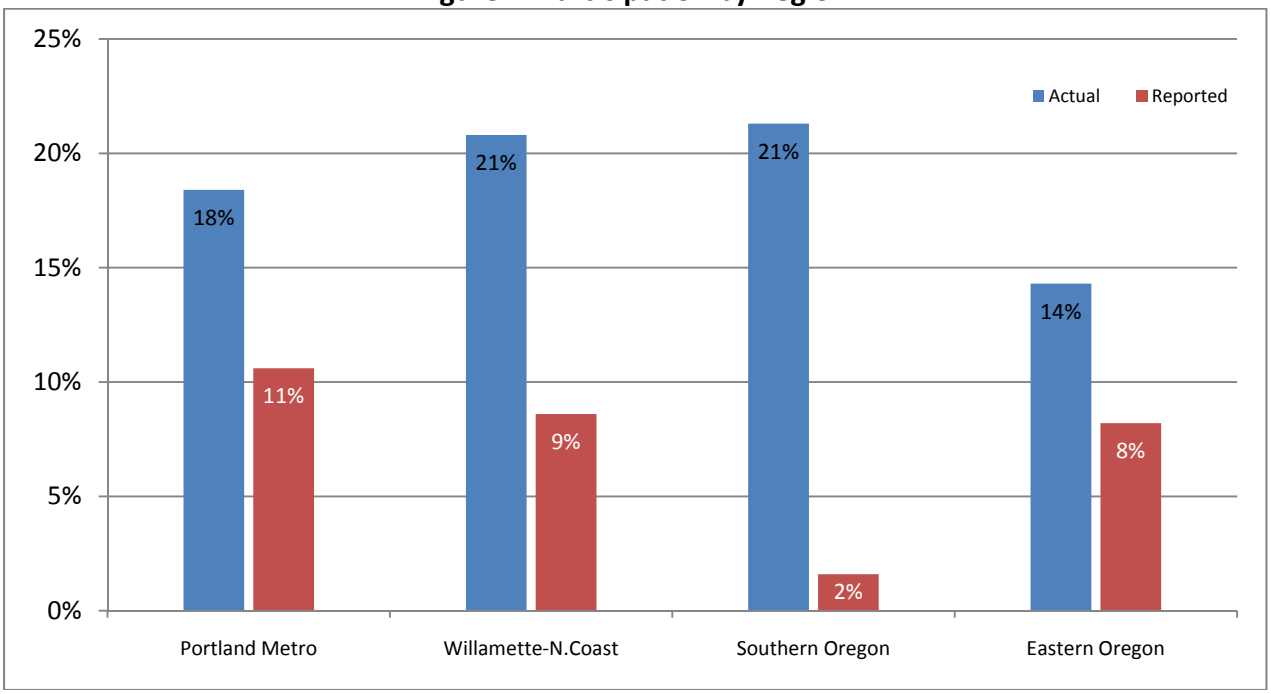
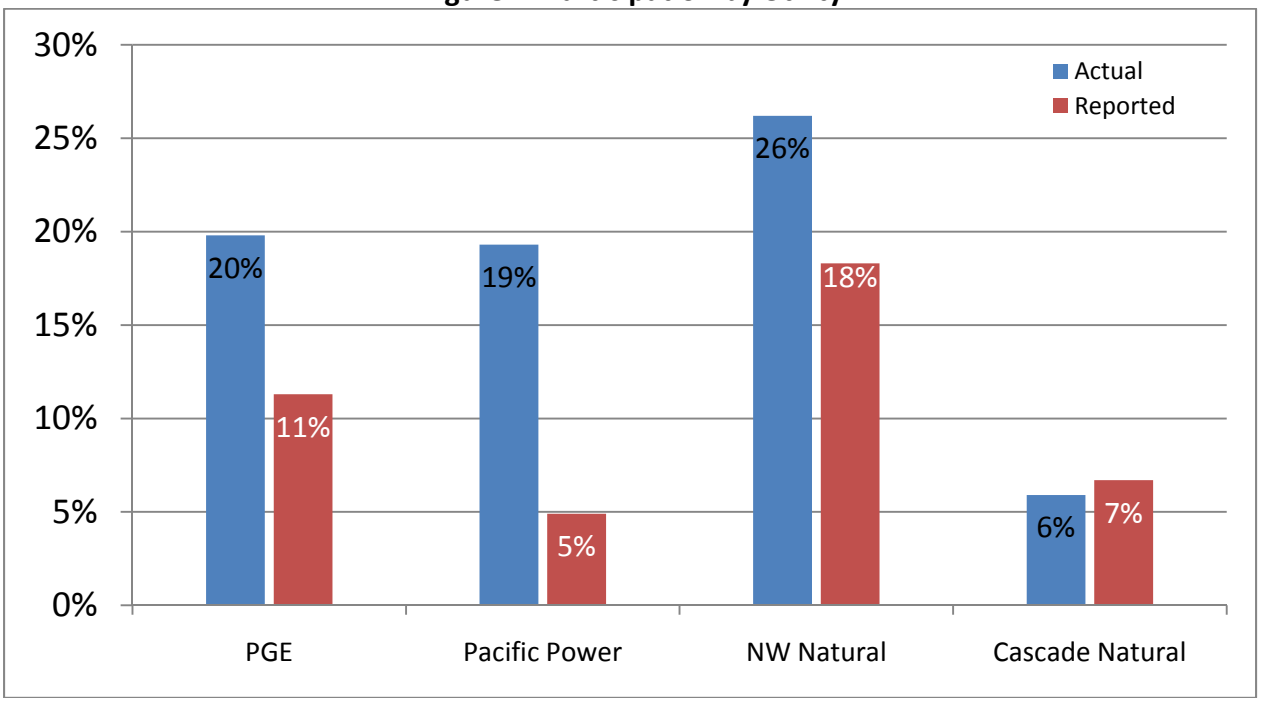
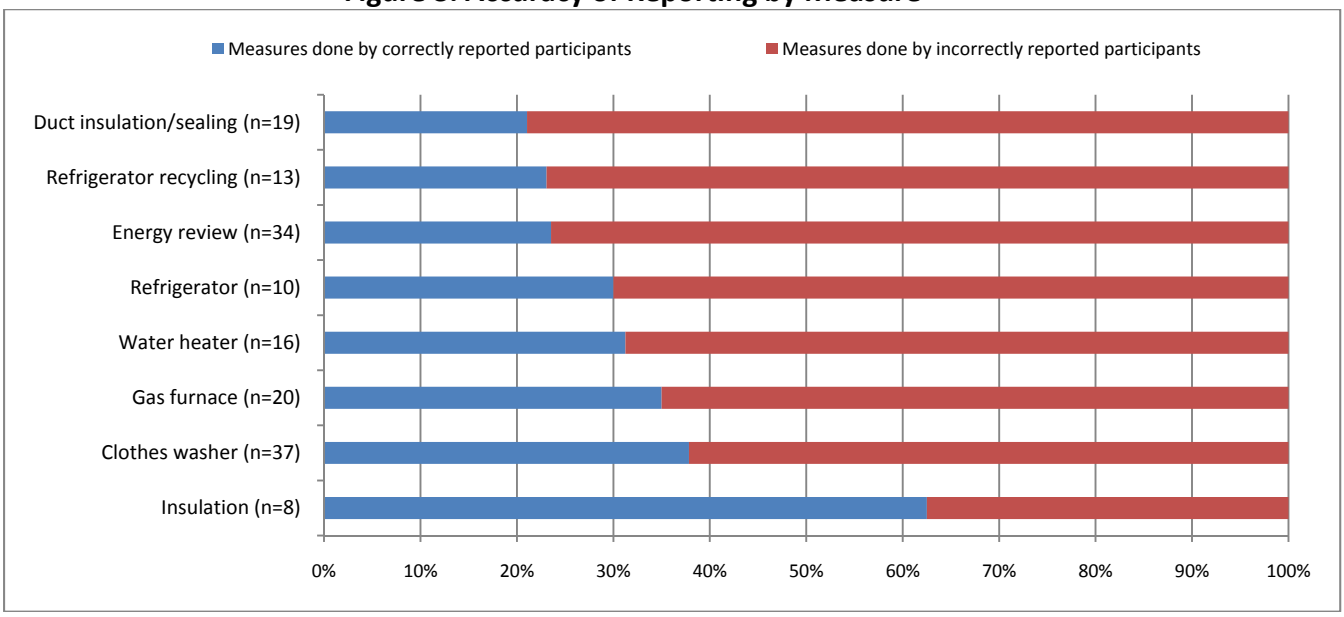


Figure 2. Participation by Utility



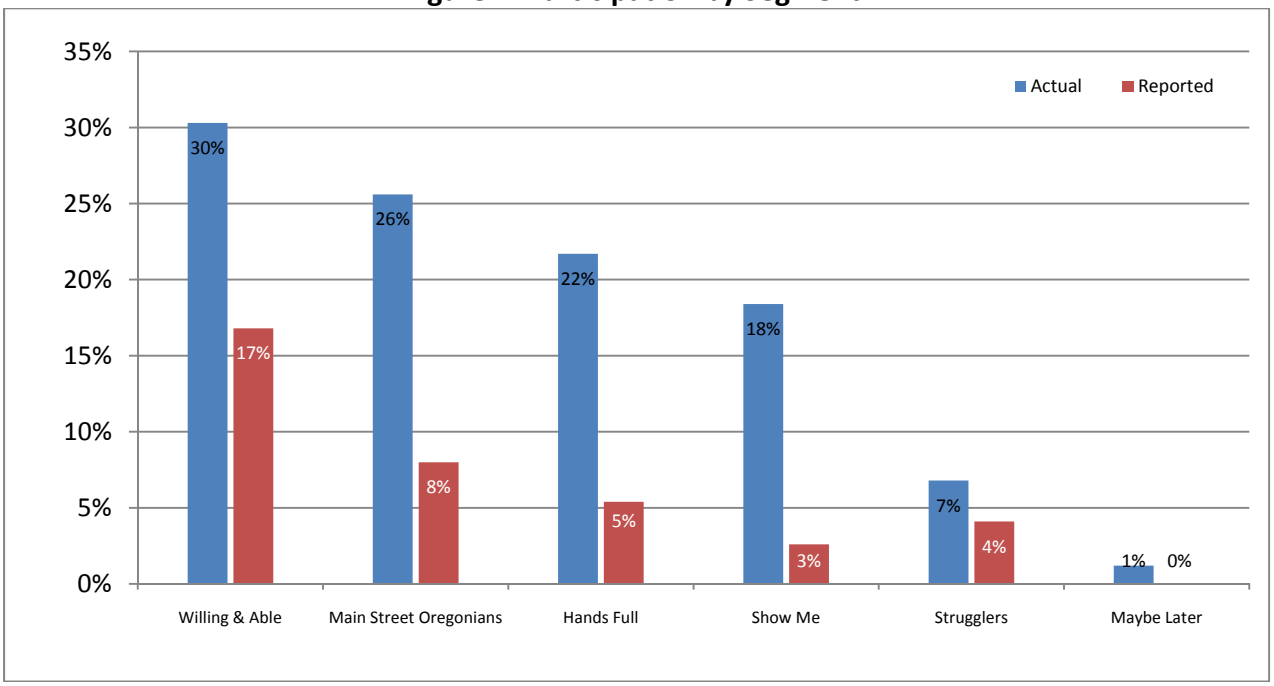
Common measures were clothes washers (37), Home Energy Reviews (34), gas furnaces (20), and duct insulation or sealing (19) (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Accuracy of Reporting by Measure



All customer segments understated their true participation, as is evident from Figure 4. The four homeowner segments (those other than Strugglers and Maybe Later) all have actual participation rates of 18% or more, and all segments have some participation.

Figure 4. Participation by Segment



Participation in all figures only includes single family programs and home products. Due to problems matching addresses with unit numbers to sites in Fast Track, multifamily property

participation is not included; in addition, participants are unlikely to report their building's participation as their own.

Figure 5 displays participation by housing type. "Other" includes manufactured and mobile homes, which most likely explains the high actual participation rate and the large discrepancy in reported participation. Incentives for common mobile home measures like duct and air sealing are paid to the contractor rather than the participant.

Figure 5. Participation by Housing Type

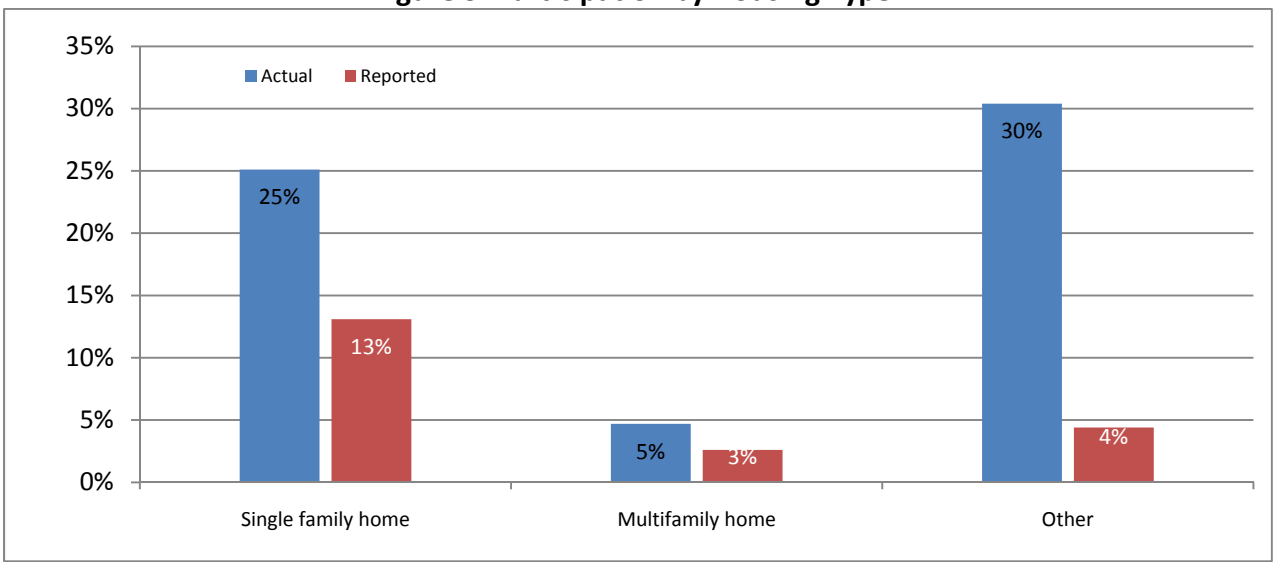
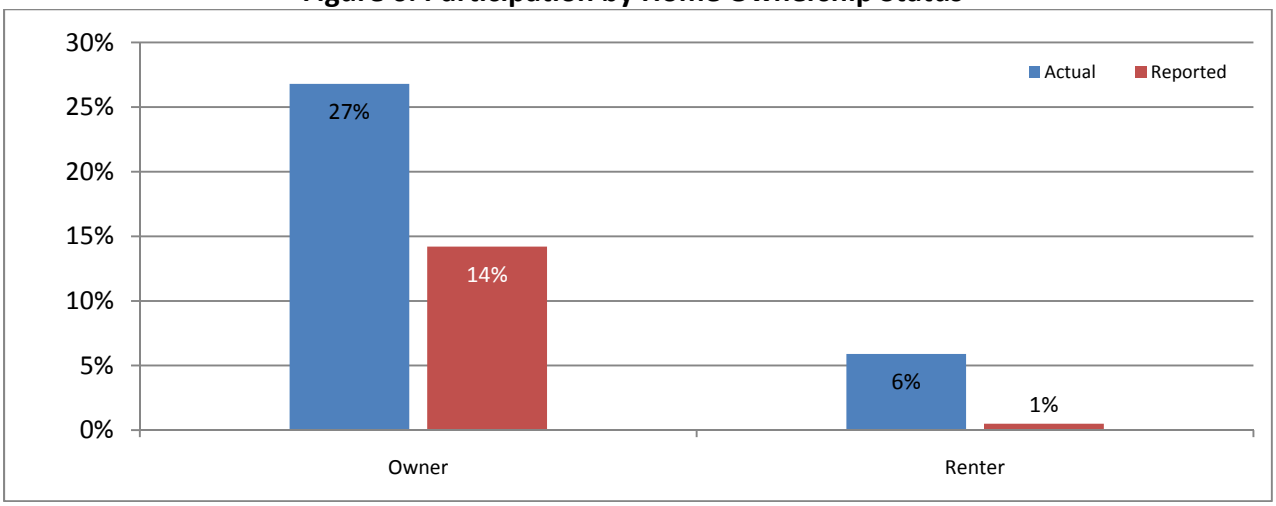
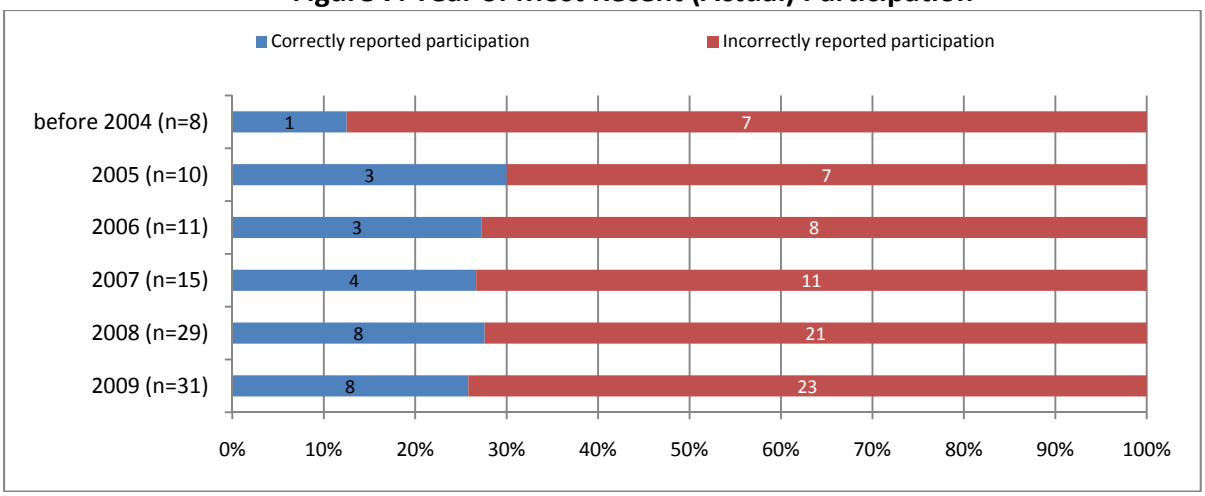


Figure 6. Participation by Home Ownership Status



The number of actual participants has increased each year, although the percent who correctly report participating has not (Figure 7). Two conclusions may be drawn here. First, we have not improved recognition of Energy Trust participation over the years. However, it also appears that remembrance of participation does not erode over time, even when the last experience was 5 years ago.

Figure 7. Year of Most Recent (Actual) Participation



Conclusions

In future general awareness surveys, we cannot rely on respondents to accurately report participation. Additional checks - such as asking about specific measures, address at participation, and current address to match with Fast Track - can inform participation rates, although ultimately participation rates should be assessed through analysis of Fast Track data. We will also alter how we ask about participation, focusing less on “participation in programs” and more on service and incentives/rebates received. This analysis will be repeated with the 2010 survey respondents.

In terms of actual participation, Energy Trust appears to be doing well at serving single-family customers in all regions and homeowner segments, although there are too few measures to compare types of measures or the dollar amounts associated with them.