

Evaluation Helps Program Increase Sales of Energy Saving Light Bulbs Among Women

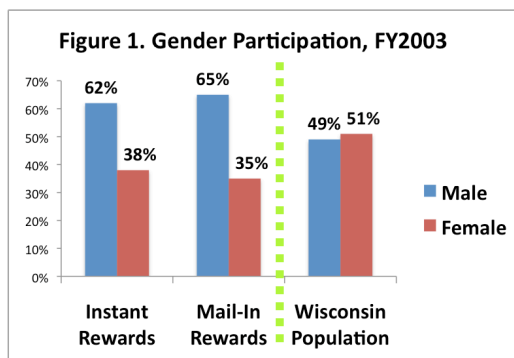
- Women nationwide have slower adoption rates of compact fluorescent lights (CFLs) than men.
- Wisconsin Focus on Energy ENERGY STAR Products Program conducts biennial installation rate studies of CFLs purchased through the program.
- A 2003 evaluation of Focus on Energy found significantly higher participation rates among males.
- The program modified its marketing strategy to target more females, based on evaluation findings.
- Evaluations in 2005 and 2007 showed a smaller gender gap in CFL sales compared to 2003.
- CFL sales grew at new retail partner outlets, where women are more likely to buy light bulbs.

Evaluation findings prompted a Wisconsin energy efficiency program to modify its program design, resulting in increased sales of compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) among women—which evaluation showed were a key target market for growth. The Focus on Energy ENERGY STAR Products Program markets ENERGY STAR products to Wisconsin residents. During promotional periods, consumers can purchase CFLs from participating retailers at a discount via instant or mail-in rewards.

Biennial surveys help quantify the extent to which CFLs purchased through the program are installed in Wisconsin homes. The surveys also collect information on program participants' attitudes, behaviors and demographics.

Evaluation helps identify an important growth market for CFLs

A 2003 evaluation found a significant gender gap in those who participated in the program. Men represented 62 percent of instant reward participants and 65 percent of mail-in reward participants, compared to 38 percent (instant reward) and 35 percent (mail-in reward) for women (Figure 1). The survey also found that among instant reward participants, women made up only 24 percent of past purchasers but represented 45 percent of first-time buyers in the program. This suggested there was an opportunity for the program to target women who have been less likely to buy CFLs in the past.



A separate analysis found one reason for the gender gap — most CFLs bought through the program were at hardware and home improvement stores, where the percentage of male purchasers ranged from 62 to 81 percent. Other studies nationwide bear out these findings. A 2006 review of CFL evaluation research found that 57 percent of CFLs were purchased at home improvement centers. Meanwhile, grocery stores—where women are more likely to purchase light bulbs—represented the biggest market for incandescent bulb purchases at 31 percent but only accounted for 1.3 percent of CFL sales.

Impact evaluation results spur changes to program strategy

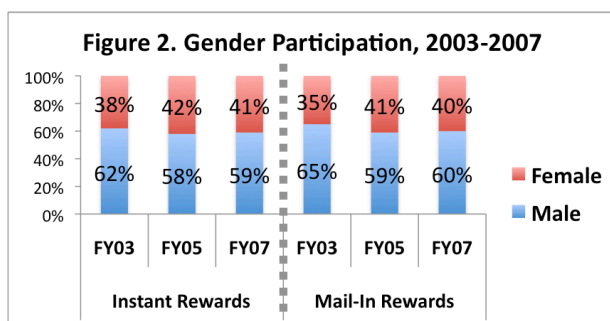
Since 2003, Focus on Energy has used a third-party consulting group to administer installation rate surveys, as well as customer research and market effects studies, to determine the impact of the ENERGY STAR Products Program on statewide CFL sales and energy savings.

Based on the 2003 evaluation results, managers of the ENERGY STAR Products Program decided to take a number of actions to modify the marketing strategy to close the gender gap. Those actions include:

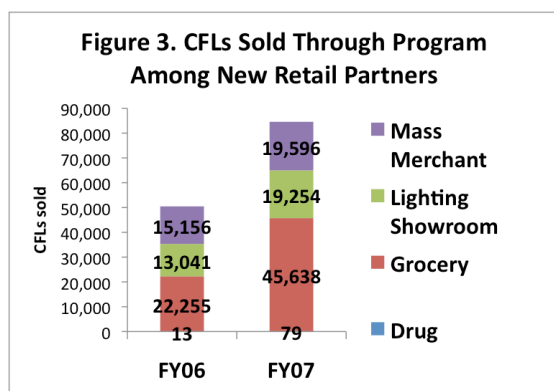
- ✦ Sought new retail partners at grocery and mass merchant stores for its program.
- ✦ Set a goal to increase the number of CFLs sold through special promotions with these new retailer types by 5 percent each year.

Program reaps benefits of new strategy

A 2005 installation rate survey found that the program had “made significant strides in closing the ‘gender gap’ by attracting women as CFL purchasers in record numbers.” While the total number of bulbs purchased by both males and females increased from 2003, the percentage of females who participated in the program increased from 38 to 42 percent for instant rewards and 35 to 41 percent for mail-in rewards—a statistically significant increase (Figure 2). A survey two years later found similar levels of participation.



In addition, the program has seen a growth in CFL sales among new retail partners. Between 2006 and 2007 alone, the number of CFLs sold through these partners (drug, grocery, lighting showroom and mass merchant) jumped 68 percent, vastly exceeding the program’s yearly goal of 5 percent (Figure 3). However, the more established retail partners — hardware and home improvement stores — still account for the vast majority of CFLs sold (over 90 percent) through the program.



Nevertheless, the new retail partners represent an opportunity to reach new customers through the program and further close the gender gap.

This case study shows the usefulness of routine program evaluation. Evaluation spotted an opportunity, the program design was improved, and the program achieved greater success with more appropriate marketing messages and distribution channels.



Sources: Interviews with Focus on Energy staff.

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For more information, contact:

Sara Van de Grift, Residential Programs Director, Wisconsin Energy Conservation Corp. & Focus on Energy
 Scott Williams, Research Writer, Wisconsin Public Utility Institute,
spwilliams@wpui.org