

# Preferences for Residential vs. Community Solar Programs in Rhode Island

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Innovation in energy technologies is necessary due to the growing impacts of climate change, especially for a coastal state such as Rhode Island. Household adoption of solar energy is an important piece of the transition from our fossil-fuel dominant energy system toward a more sustainable energy future, driving long-term growth of the state economy. Rhode Island has implemented a variety of statewide policies and incentives aimed at increasing the use of alternative energy at the household level by decreasing costs through grants and tax-incentives (DSIRE, 2018). More recently, they have designed the Community Renewables Program to promote solar adoption among low-to-moderate income (LMI) households, renters, and others who cannot install solar on their properties (Commerce RI, 2018).

By surveying Rhode Island residents, we will (1) examine the general drivers of household willingness and intention to switch to solar including demographic factors, environmental concern, novelty seeking, social and personal norms, and trust in the solar industry, (2) specifically examine what factors differ in leading residents to prefer installing solar panels at their home vs. subscribing to a community solar project, (3) examine how personal experience of climate change and land use preferences impact their decision-making.

Findings from this study will offer insights into whether policies supporting community solar would likely expand solar adoption in Rhode Island and which segments of the population would most benefit. Excerpts from ongoing research, including survey-sampling strategies from the representative town of North Providence and survey questionnaire, will be presented.