



THE RELIABLE
GRID PROJECT



DATA FOR *PROGRESS*

Stored Potential: Focus Group Perspectives on California's Battery Boom

By Grace Adcox, Anika Dandekar, and Charlotte Scott

March 2026

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Executive Summary

Through focus groups in three California communities — Orange and Ventura counties, the Central Valley, and the Central Coast — Data for Progress and the Reliable Grid Project examined Californians' attitudes on the growing battery storage industry in the state. This research identified low existing awareness of battery storage projects among Californians, and high variability in views of battery storage's potential to address the California grid's most pressing challenges.

Local perspectives on utility-scale battery storage were largely informed by existing views of major California utilities — like PG&E and SoCal Edison — in light of increasing electricity rates and high-profile wildfire incidents in recent years, as well as by personal experiences with household renewable energy technologies, like rooftop solar and home battery storage systems. While Californians in communities that have seen high deployment of battery storage were optimistic that battery storage may offer cost savings and reliability benefits, they also worried that savings won't actually be passed down to consumers, given years of rising electricity prices.

These focus group findings identified opportunities for battery storage advocates to tap into Californians' familiarity with household renewable energy technologies when sharing information about the benefits, costs, and risks of utility-scale battery storage. They also highlighted how distrust of utility providers in the state will require strategic engagement efforts to assuage community concerns about potential utility bill or wildfire risk impacts from battery storage projects. Furthermore, this research identified effective, trusted sources of information on energy issues and avenues for resolving concerns or tensions around proposed battery storage projects.

Introduction

California's Battery Boom

California's [electricity demand continues to climb](#) as building electrification, electric vehicle adoption, and a surge of energy-intensive data centers place major pressures on the grid. In response to shifting energy demand and the state's ambitious [commitments to reach 100% clean energy by 2045](#), California has been [racing to expand its battery energy storage system \(BESS\) capacity](#). Policymakers, regulators, utilities, and advocates see utility-scale batteries as essential to meet this new wave of demand without backsliding on climate goals. By storing surplus solar generation and dispatching it during peak hours, batteries help smooth both costs and demand curves as more homes, cars, and industries plug in to the grid. **California's battery storage buildout is powering a rapidly electrifying economy while maintaining reliability for the state, but do California's residents see it that way?**

Motivation for the Research

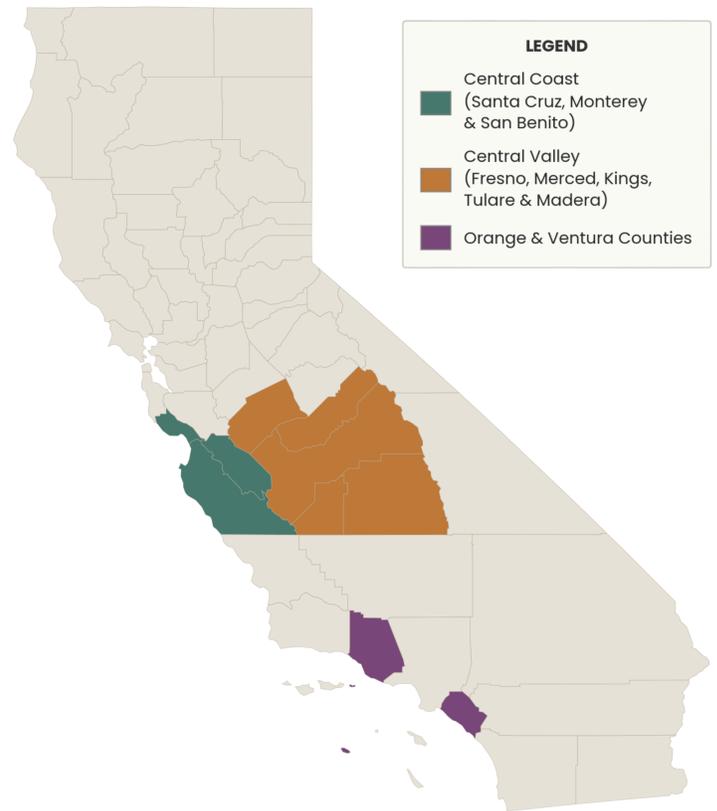
Data for Progress held three focus groups in California to explore this question on behalf of the Reliable Grid Project. The locations for these focus groups were selected to understand the views of communities that have seen high rates of battery storage deployment or plans for BESS development. Over the course of one virtual and two in-person focus groups, DFP led discussions with California voters to understand existing awareness of local battery storage deployment, as well as broader views of grid reliability in California. Participants first shared their baseline awareness and views of battery storage systems, before DFP offered a more descriptive definition and images of BESS facilities for respondents to consider. The final section of the discussion then asked participants to react to additional publicly available information about battery storage impacts on energy costs, grid reliability, and clean energy. The conversations also covered views of potential wildfire risks associated with battery storage, as well as environmental and health concerns voiced by participants. This multilayered approach allowed the research team to assess how additional information shaped respondents' understanding of and views toward battery storage.

Beyond battery storage alone, the focus groups also probed perceptions of utility providers and energy regulators in the state, and views of the state's clean energy policy ambitions. Participants in the discussions additionally named trusted (and not trusted) actors and sources that they consult to learn about energy issues and inform their views. Across these groups, DFP and the Reliable Grid Project also examined attitudes around the cost of energy and personal experiences with clean energy technologies, like rooftop solar and electric vehicles. Overall, the discussions offer a detailed look into how California voters in three key geographies — Orange and Ventura counties, the Central Valley (Fresno), and the Central Coast (Santa Cruz) — perceive current opportunities and challenges associated with the energy grid, and the role they see for battery storage in the California energy landscape.

Methodology

To carry out this research, Data for Progress and the Reliable Grid Project first identified key geographies for the focus groups and developed a participant recruitment plan. The research team determined the final audiences and geographies for each focus group based on internal discussions, a landscape analysis of battery storage deployment and planning in the state of California, and demographic analysis of the selected geographies. DFP led on the development of a participant screener that was used for recruitment.

DFP worked with Nichols Research, a California-based recruiter, to recruit voters for one virtual focus group across Orange and Ventura counties, and two in-person focus groups in Fresno (Central Valley residents) and Santa Cruz (Central Coast residents). The groups lasted 90 minutes each. The DFP team worked collaboratively with the Reliable Grid Project to draft a discussion guide and develop materials to present information to participants during the focus groups. Participants were compensated \$150 for their time and contributions to the discussion. Twelve participants were recruited for each group, with no focus group having fewer than 10 participants during the discussion. Quotas were developed for each focus group, incorporating a set of factors including gender, race and ethnicity, partisanship, socioeconomic status and home ownership, and geography to ensure a diverse and representative sample.



Key Findings

1. While battery storage was unfamiliar for many, widespread household adoption of renewable energy technologies helped jump-start the conversation.

Participants across groups demonstrated very low baseline awareness of utility-scale battery energy storage systems. Most had never heard of the technology before the discussion. While a few participants initially said they were familiar with battery storage, it quickly became clear that they were referring to household-level battery systems paired with rooftop solar, rather than large, grid-scale facilities. Personal experience with residential renewable technologies — especially solar panels, electric vehicles, and home battery systems — provided a useful entry point for understanding the concept of battery storage for the grid. Framing BESS as essentially “home batteries, but for many houses” helped participants grasp how the technology functions at a larger scale. These technologies that have become commonplace in California offer clear references for the topic of battery storage, as a respondent from the Orange/Ventura group explained: *“All the new homes have to have solar in our area. They all have a backup battery ... that’s what I was thinking when you said that.”*

Beyond the technology itself, participants were also largely unfamiliar with related policy debates and local developments. Many had not heard of moratoria on battery storage projects, and awareness of major incidents associated with the technology was also limited. The vast majority of participants in the Orange/Ventura counties and Fresno groups had not heard of the Moss Landing battery facility in Monterey County or the fire that occurred there. A participant in Fresno demonstrated the lack of public awareness on battery storage writ large by noting, *“If this is something that’s been going on for years, I feel like not only myself, but that a lot of other people [here] found out about this today. So it’s not something that has been spoken about from neighbor-to-neighbor in my opinion.”*

In contrast, participants in the Santa Cruz group were more aware of the fire due to their geographic proximity to the site. Many had seen distant smoke from the Moss Landing fire themselves, but even in this group, few knew until after the fact that the facility involved battery storage. For example, a respondent in the Santa Cruz discussion mentioned his awareness of Moss Landing’s natural gas-burning power plant, but was unfamiliar with the battery storage facility. Overall, the discussions revealed that while awareness of the technology remains limited, familiarity with household energy systems, particularly solar paired with batteries, can serve as an effective bridge for introducing and explaining utility-scale battery storage.

2. Participants saw energy costs as the grid’s biggest challenge — and wanted more information to know if battery storage was a solution.

Taking a wider lens to examine grid attitudes as a whole, California’s high energy costs were the central concern across all three discussion groups. Many participants described their electricity rates as expensive and emphasized that costs have continued to rise year over year, instead of seeing stabilization or meaningful savings. Several participants who owned solar panels said

they valued the relative predictability of their monthly utility bills, especially during the Central Valley's hot summer months, when electricity demand and bills are typically highest. Even so, the broader trend of rising rates — despite personal investments in long-term, cost-saving technologies like rooftop solar — shaped how participants evaluated battery storage technologies and potential investments in the utility system.

Participants were divided on whether increased battery storage would ultimately lower energy costs. A number of participants expressed skepticism, questioning whether the costs of purchasing, installing, and maintaining batteries would simply be passed on to consumers. A participant from Fresno voiced this concern directly: *"I don't honestly believe [battery storage] would have any impact on cost of power ... Because you gotta pay for the batteries and you gotta pay for the maintenance ... If anything, I have concern of bringing our power bills up even higher."* For many, the financial realities of deploying new infrastructure made it difficult to imagine that rates would decrease in the near future.

Relatedly, some participants worried that utilities might introduce additional fees to fund investments in battery storage and other new technologies. A participant from the Orange/Ventura counties discussion described concerns that such costs would appear as incremental charges on monthly bills: *"They'll probably start surcharging [for battery storage] ... they'll probably add little things onto our bills and service charge and here's the charge for that. And they do that with almost everything."* These concerns about hidden fees reinforced broader skepticism among some participants about whether technological investments in battery storage would ultimately benefit consumers financially, rather than utilities.

Others felt that lowering rates might be unrealistic, but still hoped to see electric bill increases slow or stabilize with greater BESS adoption. Participants across all three groups discussed the strategies they've undertaken to reduce energy costs, from limiting their energy consumption to shifting when and how they run different appliances, as this quote from an Orange/Ventura counties resident reflects: *"I've had to switch, washing clothes after 9:00 p.m., [running] the dishwasher, charging the car, to avoid the peak hours."* But participants felt like even these steps yielded few, if any, impacts on costs. As another respondent from the Orange/Ventura counties group explained, *"I think nothing will bring our [electric] rates back down. But I think that we just all wanna see them plateau at some point to where they don't keep going up so frequently and so much at a time."* This sentiment reflected a broader feeling among participants that, while energy costs may continue to rise, greater predictability or a pause in rate increases would offer meaningful relief — and at least somewhat deliver upon the promises that they've heard go unanswered from utilities for years.

3. While blackouts weren't named as a major reliability concern, participants worried about the aging grid keeping up with demand.

Participants frequently characterized the existing electrical grid as "old" or "archaic," expressing frustration that rising energy rates have not been accompanied by visible infrastructure improvements. Several participants pointed to specific elements of the system that they believe

are outdated or poorly maintained, including aging substations, above-ground transmission lines, and a perceived lack of capacity to meet growing electricity demand. As one Orange/Ventura counties participant noted, *“Bad, old substations ... kind of have been the cause for a lot of these recent wildfires. You know, obviously the fact that so many transmission lines are still above-ground rather than underground, things like that.”* Others echoed the perception that utilities have not reinvested adequately in the system even while charging higher prices. As a speaker from Santa Cruz put it, *“PG&E is raising rates, but I haven’t seen anything getting upgraded.”*

Despite these concerns about infrastructure, most participants reported experiencing relatively few blackouts in recent years. When outages did occur, participants attributed them to weather events, construction, or local disruptions, rather than routine system failures. More commonly reported among participants were minor reliability issues, such as brownouts or brief power flickers. In general, participants described electricity service as mostly reliable on a day-to-day basis, even while expressing a broader perception that the system itself is aging and under strain.

Participants were also accustomed to occasional public appeals to reduce energy use during periods of high demand, particularly during hot summer months. These requests — sometimes issued at the municipal or neighborhood level — were seen as a routine part of California’s seasonal energy management. As a participant from the Orange/Ventura counties discussion explained, *“It’s usually during the summer that we will get the infomercials. ‘Please cut down your energy usage ...’ Right now we’re not getting really messed with, but once summer rolls around, all of us are gonna get those messages to conserve power.”* While participants generally complied with such requests, several expressed skepticism that emerging technologies like household battery storage would meaningfully reduce the need for conservation messaging during peak demand events.

Indeed, across all three groups, participants were skeptical about information presented during the focus groups that stated California had not issued a statewide Flex Alert for energy conservation since 2022. Many felt this claim was inaccurate, due to their experiences with local requests for energy conservation in recent years, and didn’t consider this a believable outcome of California’s significant investments in battery storage capacity. Overall, participants viewed the grid as broadly reliable but structurally outdated, raising doubts about its ability to meet future energy needs without significant modernization — and investment in technologies like battery storage that would complement new energy generation being brought online.

4. Skepticism of battery storage (and desire for oversight) was rooted in broader dissatisfaction with California’s energy grid and utility providers.

A lack of trust in utility providers or in the regulation of these providers frequently emerged across the discussions. This lack of trust left many respondents doubtful that battery energy storage systems would deliver meaningful improvements for energy reliability or utility bills.

Participants often questioned whether new technologies, if introduced by the same utility companies or energy developers they already distrust, would actually benefit consumers.

As a result of this lack of trust and the perceived safety risks of battery storage, respondents emphasized the need for strong oversight of the battery storage industry. Many participants expressed a preference for a regulator that is private, independent, and insulated from financial incentives tied to market outcomes, arguing that oversight must be clearly separated from industry profit motives in order to build public confidence. Notably, this emphasis on “private” oversight stemmed from perceptions that public officials had not done enough to protect consumers from utilities raising energy prices, utility mismanagement leading to wildfires, and other consequences of an aging grid.

Accordingly, for many participants, distrust or skepticism of energy companies and battery storage was informed by high-profile failures of utility infrastructure in California. One respondent from Fresno reflected on the role of utilities in past wildfire disasters when weighing the impacts of new battery storage investments, asking, *“My first thought is: What is the risk difference from PG&E? Like we know that all the California fires that happened back in 2020 all came down to PG&E, right? I mean, we didn’t know that then, but you know, we know that now. Does [putting more BESS on the grid] offset any risk or does it give us more risk?”* Another respondent similarly connected wildfire risk to energy infrastructure, stating, *“So, we’ve had fires in California and a lot of the reasons that we’ve had fires in California is because of the energy usage ... I’m PG&E. And they’re one of the biggest offenders when it comes to having fires and whatnot because of their technology.”* These comments illustrate how past utility failures continue to shape public perceptions of risk and trust in new energy systems, not just with respect to PG&E, but other providers in the state as well, like SoCal Edison.

Beyond their skepticism toward large utility providers and their regulators, respondents who were rooftop solar customers also voiced frustration with home solar companies. These concerns stemmed from experiences with difficult maintenance or upgrade processes in solar contracts, aggressive or pushy sales tactics, and high turnover among companies in the industry. Such experiences contributed to a broader sense of instability in the household renewable energy technology market. At the same time, respondents demonstrated a high level of familiarity with emerging energy technologies driven by their household adoption of these tools. Many had direct experience with technologies such as rooftop solar or electric vehicles, and they frequently referenced the experiences of neighbors, family members, or others in their communities when forming their opinions. This mix of personal and community-based knowledge shaped how participants evaluated new energy infrastructure in the form of battery storage.

Given these concerns, participants repeatedly stressed that overcoming public skepticism will require greater transparency from energy companies and policymakers. Respondents emphasized the importance of clearly communicating the costs, benefits, and potential risks associated with battery storage facilities. For many, transparent information and independent

oversight were seen as essential steps toward rebuilding trust and ensuring that the expansion of battery storage infrastructure is perceived as both safe and beneficial to local communities.

5. Concerns about wildfire, environmental, and health risks were closely connected to views about where and how battery storage projects are sited.

Across all three focus groups, wildfire risk emerged as a major concern related to battery energy storage. Wildfire risk was of concern even with the Moss Landing facility being largely unfamiliar to respondents outside of the Santa Cruz focus group. Participants across locations believed battery storage would increase the risk of fires, even if they disagreed about the likelihood of that risk or California's preparedness to address that risk. They drew on examples of lithium battery fire incidents involving phones, electric vehicles, and other small devices to illustrate their concerns about the potential impacts of grid-scale battery storage facilities.

Fire concerns were a central issue for all groups, but respondents in Fresno focused more on potential health consequences from battery fires, particularly concerns about smoke and air quality. As one participant from Fresno explained:

"Personally, [wildfires are] a huge [concern]. I have a lot of people in my family who have asthma and anything in the air ... it can go down really quick, especially when we had those bad fires 2–3 years ago. It was detrimental to family I have in Mariposa. They had to get evacuated because they just couldn't breathe the air."

Additionally, participants in Santa Cruz expressed concerns about environmental impacts from fires or battery disposal, including possible effects on water quality, agricultural products, and local species. On this topic, one participant said, *"I think there's a lot of environmental damage that can be done by ... the disposal of the batteries and you know, what happens when they die."* Santa Cruz participants also placed their concerns in the context of the Moss Landing battery storage fire and its impacts to the surrounding area, given the community's scenic landscape and outdoor industries. Orange/Ventura counties participants voiced similar concerns, though the risks of cost spikes from investments in new battery storage infrastructure were more salient than potential physical risks from wider battery deployment.

Notably, these concerns informed attitudes about where such facilities should be constructed, and how. Across groups, participants voiced concerns about locating battery storage facilities near homes, natural habitats, or agricultural areas. They stressed the importance of strong oversight and clear safety standards to ensure best practices for risk management are followed. In each of the three groups, participants raised questions about whether battery storage facilities should be located remotely or near population centers.

While many participants initially expressed a knee-jerk view that battery storage should be placed in remote, faraway locations, as the discussions progressed, participants revealed more openness to BESS siting near their communities. For example, in each of the discussions, a participant described the way that electricity transmission functions — by passing high-voltage

electricity from places where energy is produced, to the end consumers who use lower-voltage energy for their homes, businesses, and appliances. These participants who had a stronger baseline grasp of how the grid operates made a point of stating that energy storage is less effective when it is located farther from where energy will be produced or eventually used. Having a peer describe this concept helped other participants in the discussion consider more critically which factors or safeguards would help them feel reassured about safety mitigation for battery storage projects located closer to population centers.

Although the Moss Landing facility itself was not widely recognized outside Santa Cruz, wildfire risk and its attendant consequences remains a pervasive lens through which communities in California evaluate new energy infrastructure. As a result, participants emphasized that proponents of battery storage projects must clearly demonstrate how fire risks will be mitigated and what safeguards are in place to protect nearby communities and ecosystems. Participants proposed solutions to address their chief concerns, including maintaining adequate firebreak distances between battery units, implementing robust fire mitigation measures, and ensuring proper procedures for battery disposal at the end of their life cycle.

6. Optimism about electrification also came with significant concerns about the readiness of supporting infrastructure.

Participants generally described themselves — and Californians more broadly — as supportive of efforts to reduce the state’s dependence on fossil fuels and expand the use of clean, renewable energy sources. Most respondents were at least open-minded about the state’s broader net-zero and electrification goals. At the same time, many expressed concerns about how these policies are unfolding in practice, particularly as households face rising electricity rates during this period of rapid electrification and growing energy demand.

A recurring theme across discussions was uncertainty about the state’s infrastructure and energy system’s preparedness to support the pace and scale of electrification underway. Some participants pointed to a lack of visible improvements and mixed public messaging as reasons they question whether the system is ready for widespread electrification. As a participant from Santa Cruz put it, *“I love Santa Cruz and living here, but the infrastructure all the way around — roads, power, the water situation — is not keeping up with what they want us to do.”*

These concerns often fed into a broader perception that policy ambitions may be moving faster than practical implementation, leaving consumers to absorb the inconvenience and rising costs in the meantime. Participants frequently linked higher electricity prices to surging demand from multiple sources and uncertainty about the pace of new energy supply coming online, as a respondent from Orange/Ventura counties explained:

“Overall energy demand has just grown so much in the last few years from all different sources, industries — particularly AI — that even though we’re bringing all these energy storage facilities and these things online ... we’re just not generating enough power to

meet the growth in the demand for electricity. And that probably kind of explains partly why prices are going up.”

Overall, while respondents generally supported the long-term direction of California’s clean energy transition, many expressed doubts about whether utilities and state energy planners are adequately prepared to address consumers’ short-term concerns, especially around reliability, infrastructure readiness, and rising household electricity costs.

7. Participants named community platforms, personal connections, and local news sources as more trusted on the issue of batteries and the grid.

Altogether, a majority of participants reported consuming relatively little information about energy issues in their day-to-day lives. Among those who were more engaged, information habits tended to be diverse and fragmented, reflecting uneven levels of trust across different sources. Rather than relying on a single outlet, these participants described piecing together information from a range of media, personal networks, and independent research to form their understanding of energy policy and infrastructure issues. Importantly, the most common avenues of exposure to information about the grid and related issues came from personal experiences, or the experiences of family, friends, and neighbors.

Community-based platforms played a particularly important role during local events. Several Santa Cruz participants highlighted neighborhood forums on Facebook and Nextdoor as key sources of real-time updates during the Moss Landing fire and in the weeks that followed. In these moments, community channels were often viewed as faster and more responsive than official communication, allowing neighbors to share safety updates and firsthand observations. As a participant from Santa Cruz explained learning about the fire though, “... *the Nextdoor sites, everybody has their little neighborhood thing and [the Moss Landing fire] was all over all of those, but it was just obvious.*”

Beyond social platforms, participants described relying on a mix of personal connections and established media sources. Some said they learned about energy issues through neighbors with rooftop solar or through contacts working in the solar industry. Others cited trusted traditional outlets, such as NPR, the BBC, and local television stations, like KSBW in Santa Cruz, alongside their own independent research via utility or government websites. At the same time, participants noted that their trust in institutions and official sources was perhaps less durable than it used to be. A respondent from Santa Cruz described cross-checking multiple sources to deal with this uncertainty:

“There’s some sources that I trust a little bit more than others, like NPR, BBC. I feel like they give a bit more balanced view, but I also go to a lot of the actual research sites and government sites ... But at the same time, that’s also challenging because there’s been some changes to information on the White House sites that are not ... I won’t go too far into that. I’m just saying some of the sources before that felt fairly safe, no longer feel trustworthy.”

To the extent that participants are encountering news about the electric grid or battery storage, information rooted in personal experience, local networks, or trusted experts tends to carry more credibility than political messaging or promotional outreach. As a respondent from Orange/Ventura counties put it, *“It’d be nice to hear from respected, renowned environmental people and scientists, not politicians, and not leaflets, and not some guy knocking on my door.”*

When asked explicitly who would be trusted to share accurate, unbiased information about battery storage technologies, participants named battery storage engineers, power linemen, and firefighters as some of the individuals they would be interested in learning from. Generally across the three discussions, there was a sense that a person in a suit or in a lab coat might not be an unbiased messenger. Hearing external perspectives was considered critical for community members to find the information credible or trustworthy, even though participants also felt it was important to have scientists, developers, and utilities themselves available to answer questions about their proposed battery storage projects.

Strategic Recommendations

A lack of familiarity with battery storage, alongside high local familiarity with household renewable energy technologies, offers a window of opportunity to educate California communities on the potential benefits of battery storage investments, such as lower costs and increased reliability. Advocates can build upon existing familiarity with rooftop solar, electric vehicles, and home battery systems when messaging about the applications and benefits of utility-scale battery storage.

Attitudes about battery storage range from skeptical to optimistic. Existing frustrations with energy costs, the grid, and California’s utility providers could easily spill over into attitudes around battery storage. To build support for battery storage projects, advocates should work with trusted local messengers, like battery plant engineers, to communicate about the risks and costs of battery storage, and offer reassurance to residents that effective oversight of the industry, particularly to mitigate fire risk, is in place. Outreach should happen frequently, and start early — not when permits are in hand for a project. The lack of nearby awareness that there was a battery storage facility at Moss Landing prior to the fire taking place is one example that illustrates that communities may not have enough information about projects to feel confident that adequate protections are in place for this industry.

Critically, advocates must be able to address questions about the life cycle of batteries, including their longevity and plans for disposing of spent batteries, as well as questions about potential costs passed to electricity consumers from investing in this technology. Respondents indicated a preference for receiving clear, accessible information, including hard data about the performance of battery storage facilities. This also goes for sharing the findings of environmental reviews; focus group participants expressed fears that they are often the last to learn about a potential risk because these documents aren’t readily shared with host communities. Similarly, participants indicated that transparent, robust oversight frameworks

would significantly increase their ability to trust that utility-scale battery storage deployment offers localized benefits while minimizing local risk.

Advocates can also consider additional strategies to enhance trust of battery storage technologies via siting policy reforms. Beyond independent oversight and monitoring of the battery storage industry, respondents indicated that they would be more likely to trust battery storage deployment if the industry adopts strong fire prevention and response plans. Participants voiced several suggestions about specific policy interventions that would make them more trusting of battery storage, including siting setbacks to reduce fire risk to nearby infrastructure and homes outside the perimeter of the facility, as well as firebreak zone requirements between individual battery storage units.

Conclusion

This report identifies a key window of opportunity to demonstrate that California's battery storage boom is yielding reliability and cost savings for the grid, while supporting climate ambition and shouldering increased energy demand. While Californians have well-developed views of household renewable energy technologies, like rooftop solar, household battery storage, and electric vehicles, utility-scale battery storage is still not a kitchen table subject. Proponents of battery storage in the Golden State can seize these findings to develop effective communication strategies to educate communities about the benefits that they can expect to see from further battery storage deployment.

Appendix

Methodology

Data for Progress (DFP) worked with Nichols Research, a qualified California-based recruiter, to recruit voters for one virtual focus group and two in-person focus groups in California. The groups lasted 90 minutes each. The DFP team worked collaboratively with the Reliable Grid Project to draft a discussion guide and develop materials to present information to participants during the focus groups. The focus groups were moderated by an in-house qualitative specialist from DFP, with support from DFP staff who took notes and recorded outcomes of interactive exercises during the discussions. Participants were compensated \$150 for their time and contributions to the discussion.

Twelve participants were recruited for each group, with the aim of seating at least eight participants per group. No focus group had fewer than 10 participants during the discussion. Participants were recruited to ensure mixes by gender, ethnicity, partisanship, and geography to ensure a diverse and representative sample. The three groups included respondents from the following locations:

- Virtual Orange and Ventura counties group, N=11
- Fresno (Central Valley residents) group, N=11
- Santa Cruz (Central Coast residents) group, N=10

The findings of these focus groups are qualitative, and should not be interpreted as statistically representative nor extrapolated to wider populations. These findings illuminate patterns of thought across the region, providing nuanced insights into attitudes and concerns related to battery storage and the grid within these communities.

Participant Demographics

Number of participants	32	Count	Percentage
Number of focus groups	3		*Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding or respondents selecting more than one option.
Gender	Female	17	53
	Male	15	47
Age	18-29	3	9
	30-39	6	19
	40-49	9	28
	50-59	7	22
	60-69	6	19
	70+	1	3
Race/Ethnicity	White	15	50
	Black or African American	1	3
	Hispanic or Latino/a	15	50
	Asian or Asian American	3	9
Income	Less than \$25,000	2	6
	\$25,000-\$50,000	3	9
	\$50,001-\$75,000	5	16
	\$75,001-\$100,000	5	16
	\$100,001-\$150,000	6	19
	More than \$150,000	11	34
Employment Status	Employed, full time	19	59
	Employed, part time	5	16
	Unemployed	2	6
	Retired	4	13
	Parent/caregiver	2	6
Partisanship	Democrat	12	38
	Independent / Third party	14	44
	Republican	6	19
Housing status	Own	17	53
	Rent	14	44
	Other arrangement	1	3



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