



A-3

FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

 **WA RUC**

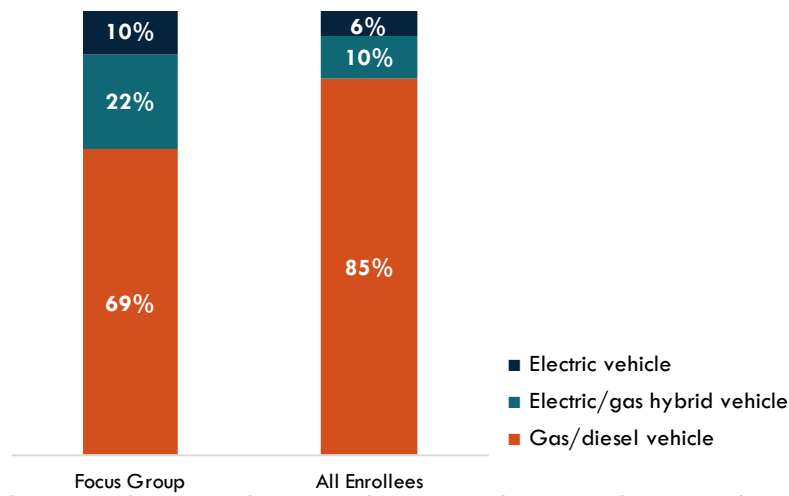
Appendix A-3: Focus Groups

The participant focus groups explored perceptions on topics such as RUC equity relative to gas taxes, privacy protection, data security, and ease of participation and compliance. These discussions complemented the surveys sent to all approximately 2,000 participants by providing more depth into the “what, how, and why” of participant perceptions.

PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

All pilot participants provided information during a pre-enrollment questionnaire and as part of the pilot project’s voluntary surveys. A comparison of characteristics between focus group participants and overall participant pool is summarized in Exhibit 1 through Exhibit 8. When an individual enrollee’s information is unavailable, they are not counted in the share of enrollees shown in the comparison results.

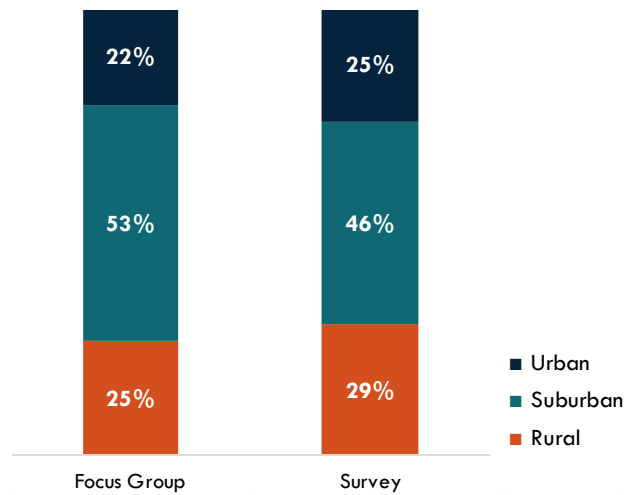
Exhibit 1. What kind of vehicle did you enroll in the WA RUC pilot?



The share of participants enrolled an electric or hybrid vehicle is greater in focus groups than among all enrollees (32% compared to 16%).

NOTES:
Focus group n=51
All enrollees n =1,936

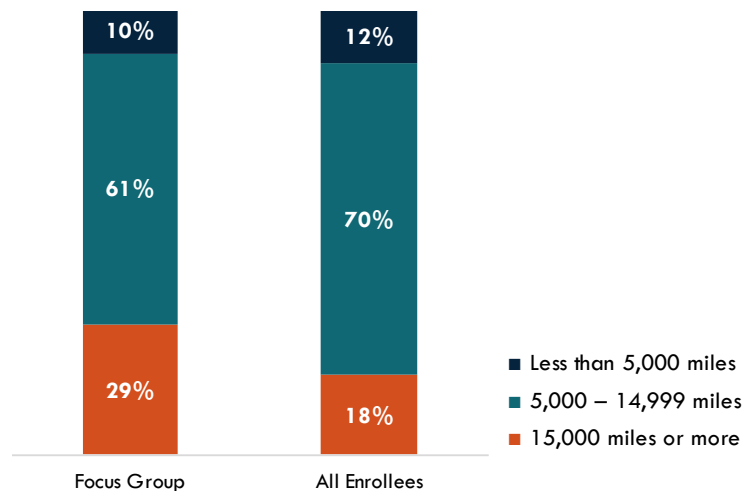
Exhibit 2. How would you describe where you live?



The distribution of where participants live is similar between focus group participants and survey participants.

NOTES: The survey question response represents 83% of all pilot participants.
Focus group n=51
Survey 1 n =1,607

Exhibit 3. On average, how many miles a year do you typically drive?

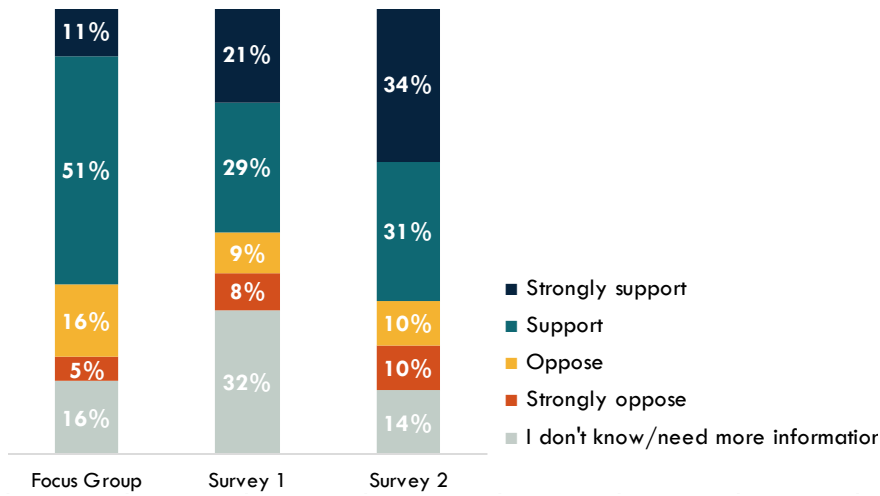


The share of people who drive 15,000 miles or more per year is higher in focus groups than among all enrollees (29% compared to 18%).

The share of people who drive fewer than 5,000 miles or less per year is similar across both the focus groups and among all enrollees (10% compared to 12%).

NOTES:
Focus group n=51
All enrollees n =1,930

Exhibit 4. What is your current opinion on a road usage charge as a way to pay for Washington State roads?

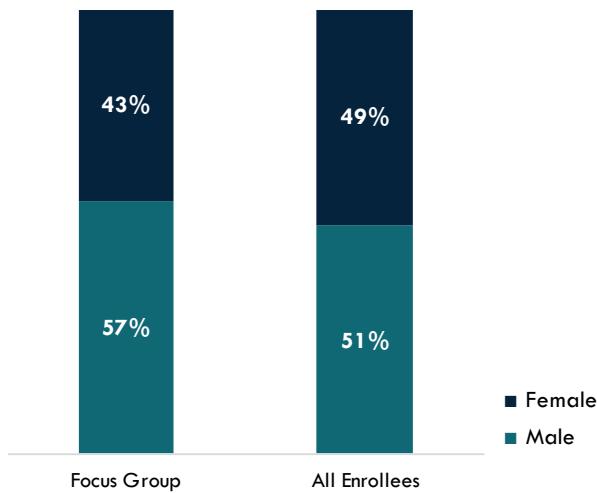


The share of people who support or oppose a RUC is similar in focus groups and survey participants.

Over the pilot, participants have become more supportive of a RUC (from 50% to 65%) and less uncertain. There is a stable cohort who oppose a RUC in the surveys (17%-20%) and 21% in the focus groups.

NOTES: Response rates were 84% and 81% for Surveys 1 and 2 respectively.
Focus group n=51
Survey 1 n =1,635
Survey 2 n =1,572

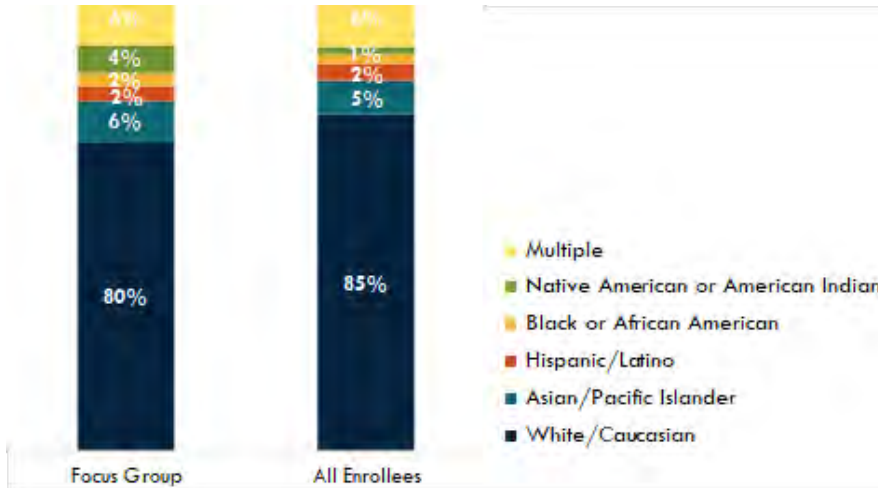
Exhibit 5. What is your gender?



57% of focus group participants, compared to 51% of all enrollees, identify as male. 43% of focus group participants, compared to 49% of all enrollees, identify as female.

NOTES:
Focus group n=51
All n =1,914

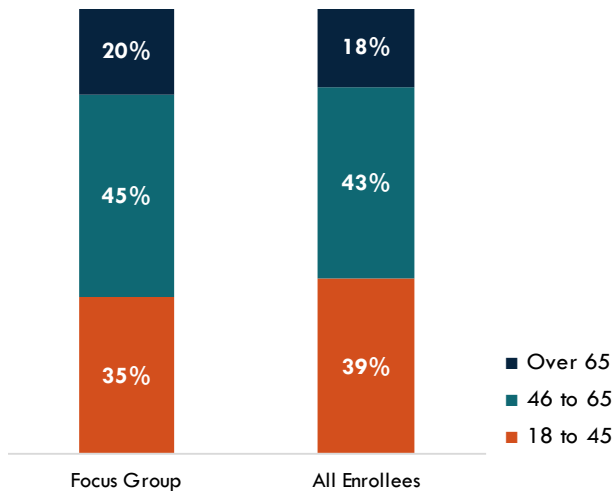
Exhibit 6. Which of the following do you identify with? Check all that apply.



20% of focus group participants, compared to 15% of all enrollees, identify as people of color.

NOTES:
Focus group n=50
All n =1,841

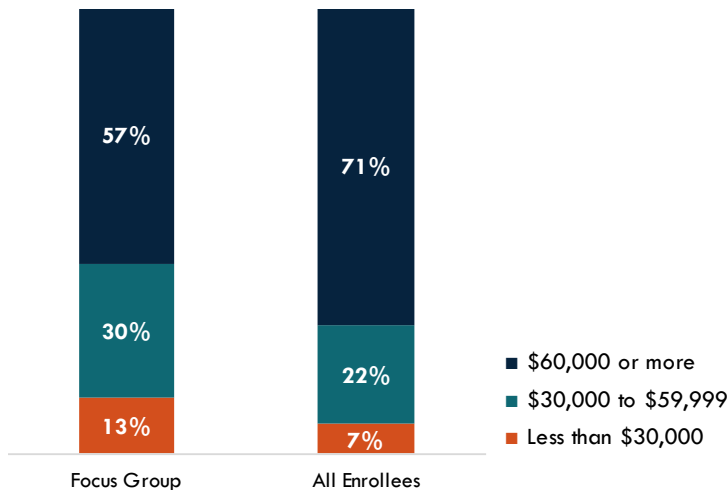
Exhibit 7. What is your age?



Age distribution was similar across both groups.

NOTES:
Focus group n=51
All n =1,937

Exhibit 8. What is your annual household income?



The share of participants reporting a household income under \$30,000 is greater in focus groups than among all enrollees.

NOTES:
Focus group n=51
All n =1,837

OTHER FINDINGS

Privacy and Data Sharing

Some participants were concerned about privacy and/or sharing data with the government, while others were not. Primarily participants concerned with privacy had questions about how and with whom the government might share their data. Many of these participants support offering reporting options that do not collect location information or additional personal data, with the ability for users to control the information they share.

- **Reasons for concern:** Want the ability to not share their data. Do not want to share data with car insurance companies and law enforcement. Worried about public disclosure laws.
- **Reasons not concerned:** Currently give data away with smartphones, and other programs, and to many companies. Appreciated the added benefits that the private vendor offered, such as driving behavior scores.

Fairness and Equity

Fairness and equity arose in each of the focus groups. Participants discussed and debated whether a RUC or a gas tax is more fair. People seemed to think that the RUC is slightly more fair than the gas tax but would be harder to implement and administer. Participants also discussed what factors should be included in fairness and equity, and what fairness means to them. Definitions of fairness included that all vehicles pay, that it accounts for income, and that everyone pays for what they use. Participants brought up the following issues in considering fairness in a RUC.

- **Vehicle type.** A RUC is more fair between gas and electric/hybrid vehicles because it separates fuel consumption from road usage. However, some worry that a RUC may discourage drivers from purchasing electric or hybrid vehicles because they would save less on gas tax. Some commented that hybrid/electric vehicles already pay a higher registration/ renewal fee than gas vehicles.
 - *I would not pay the expense to get a more fuel-efficient vehicle because I would save less.*
- **Low- or moderate-income individuals.** In Federal Way, some participants described how low- and moderate-income individuals and households are priced out of certain communities, and therefore drive further for work, to reach services, and run errands.
 - *My first impression of RUC was, how are lower income people going to be able to live? I thought poorer people would be charged more. People with lower incomes can't afford to get their cars fixed. My view has changed, but I was first concerned if I was going to be able to live here.*
 - *A road usage charge is different from a gas tax. For low income people, I must move further and further away to afford a place to live, and I also have to drive more to reach health care providers.*
- **Vehicle weight and studded tires.** Participants in Vancouver and Yakima mentioned that vehicle weight should be a factor in determining a RUC, as heavier vehicles or those with studded tires cause more damage to the road. Participants tended to think about impacts to the roads in terms of physical, such as wear and tear, rather than spatial or temporal due to limited right of way, which results in congestion.

Road Usage Charge Amount

- Most focus group participants would pay slightly more with a RUC compared to the current gas tax (if the amounts were equivalent as in the pilot), but many felt it was not too expensive at only a few more dollars per month. This amount was acceptable to most participants, including the low- and moderate-income group, hybrid/electric vehicle group, and rural/high mileage group. One participant expressed concern about who will decide when and how much the charge is increased.

Transportation Funding

- Most participants did not know either the current Washington state or federal gas tax rate. Only in Spokane did most participants correctly note the current gas tax rates.
- Most participants were unaware of what gas tax revenue currently pays for. Of those that knew, they mentioned maintenance and construction of state roads and bridges. Operations of Washington State Ferries was mentioned by one individual. No one mentioned policing of state roads.
- Some believe that money is wasted on transportation and the Legislature will not spend the funding wisely. Others were concerned that the money would be spent only in Western Washington.

Driving Behavior

A few participants noted that the pilot project changed their driving behavior. The most frequently mentioned reason for driving behavior changes was the plug-in recording device that calculated driving scores based on safety (as opposed to the amount of the invoice) . Most participants continued driving as usual.

There were several *potential* behavior changes mentioned by low or moderate-income participants. In areas like Seattle where it is more expensive to live closer to employment hubs, low-income individuals felt they might have to pay more under a RUC due to long commutes.

Participants mentioned the following driving behavior changes:

- More aware of driving behavior from my drive scores.
- Took fewer trips, driving less.
- Started looking for a job near my house, became more conscious.
- Take the shorter route on Google maps (even if it's slower).