

Californians use less electricity than rest of U.S.

By Brad Plumer, Washington Post

The average Californian uses about 33 percent less electricity at home than the average American in the rest of the country. That shouldn't be overly surprising, given the state's mild weather.

What is surprising, though, is that California's electricity use has basically stayed flat for the past four decades, in stark contrast with the rest of the United States.

Since 1960, household electricity use in the rest of the United States has more than tripled, climbing past 12,000 kWh per person on average (although it has plateaued of late). By contrast, in California, electricity use per capita doubled in the 1960s but then more or less stopped growing for the next four decades.

Why would that be? One popular theory is that California's particularly aggressive green policies should get credit. Back in the 1970s, the state began adopting stringent standards to promote energy-saving appliances and home insulation. Then, in 1982, California tweaked its utility regulations, in a policy known as "decoupling." Power companies would no longer get paid based on the number of electrons they sold. Instead, they'd have incentives to promote efficiency.

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