

## CONSENT TO TAKE PART IN RESEARCH

**TITLE OF RESEARCH:** Impact of AI Data Center Expansion on Residential Electricity Prices in New Jersey

**Principal Investigator:** Kiran Garimella, Assistant Professor of Library and Information Science

This consent form is part of an informed consent process for research, and it will provide information that will help you decide whether you want to take part in this research. It is your choice whether to take part or not. After all your questions have been answered and you wish to take part in this research, you will be asked to provide your consent. You will be given a copy of this form to keep. Your alternative to taking part in the research is not to take part in it.

### Who is conducting this research and what is it about?

You are being asked to participate in research conducted by Kiran Garimella, Assistant Professor of Library and Information Science at the School of Communication and Information at Rutgers University. The purpose of this study is to measure the current, real-world impact of AI data center build-out on the monthly electricity bills of residents of the state of New Jersey.

### What will I be asked to do if I take part?

If you agree to participate in this research, participants will be directed to a secure project website (<https://nj-energy-study.sci.rutgers.edu/>) to read and acknowledge this e-consent form.

Once you have acknowledged this e-consent, you will be asked to upload 12-24 previous monthly utility bill invoices. We will present you with steps on the website to self-guide you through the file upload. In addition, you will be asked to complete a brief survey.

There will be an option to request support if you have trouble uploading your utility bills. If you need assistance, you may schedule a Zoom call with the research team to receive a tutorial on where to find your bill and how to upload the bill.

You will also be asked to complete a brief survey. The survey is expected to take you 5 minutes to complete.

A field will be available post-utility invoice upload if you would like to participate in an optional follow-up interview. If you provide your email, you may be contacted to take part in a 30-minute interview, where you will discuss your perception of your monthly electricity bills and your concerns and understanding of data centers' energy usage and potential strain on the electricity grid infrastructure.

Dr. Garimella and Rich will request your permission to do an audio recording of the interview. You do not have to consent to be recorded to take part in the research. Please let the researcher know if you do not wish to be recorded.

We anticipate 750 participants will take part in the main study (survey and data upload), and a subset of 30 participants will take part in the interview activity.

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### **What are the risks and/or discomforts I might experience if I take part in the research?**

Breach of confidentiality is a risk of harm. But a data security plan is in place to minimize such a risk. The risks of file uploading are minimal. Your bills contain name, address, account number, and usage information, which will be kept strictly confidential. However, The audio recording of the follow-up interview may include information that could identify you, such as your name, zip code, and voice. However, the audio recordings will be stored in the PI's password-protected, encrypted university server folder that will not be accessible to anyone else. While transcribing, your name will be replaced with pseudonyms of your choosing, and only the pseudonyms will be used in subsequent publications.

Also, if any of the questions in the survey or interview make you feel uncomfortable, then you can skip those questions or withdraw from the research altogether. If you decide to quit the study, your responses will NOT be saved.

### **Are there any benefits to me if I choose to take part in this research?**

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study. However, your participation is expected to contribute to the discovery of information that may help protect consumers from unfair pricing. In addition, you will be contributing to knowledge about the effects of AI data centers on residential energy bills.

### **Will I be paid to take part in this research?**

If you upload and submit at least 12 months of utility bill information, complete the brief survey, and provide us with your email, you will be paid in the form of a \$15 Mastercard gift card. The gift card will be sent to your email within 2 weeks of submitting your utility bills and completing the survey.

If volunteer for and are chosen to participate in the interview portion of the research, you will receive an additional \$20 Mastercard gift card, sent to your email within 2 weeks of participating in the interview. To qualify for compensation, you must participate in the interview process.

### **How will information about me be kept private or confidential?**

All efforts will be made to keep your responses confidential, but total confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

The recording will contain your voice, which some individuals may be able to identify you by. The recordings will be destroyed after they have been transcribed and verified for accuracy. In addition, it is possible that you may share some identifiable information during the interview.

All billing data uploaded will be likely include identifiable information (account numbers, name, address). However, we will remove the identifiable information from the uploaded data within 24 hours. We will only retain your 5-digit zip code, monthly usage (in kWh), and total monthly cost (\$).

If you choose to provide your email, for compensation or for the interview scheduling, we will maintain this identifier in a secure file.

If you participate in an interview, we will ask you to provide your name and zip code. Any notes  
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taken during the interview will be stored in Dr. Garimella's restricted and password-protected drive folder.

All data will be stored on a secure, encrypted university server. I Identifiable information will not be stored with your responses. Instead, your responses will be assigned a pseudonym, which will be stored separately from your identifiable information so others will not know which responses are yours. When data collection is complete, your identifiable information will be destroyed, so no link will exist between your identity and your responses.

There is no plan to delete the de-identified responses. We plan to study your data for many years.

No information that can identify you will appear in any professional presentation or publication.

### **What will happen to the information I provide in the research after the research is over?**

After information that could identify you has been removed, de-identified responses may be analyzed by the research team. The data will not be shared with anyone else.

### **What will happen if I do not want to take part or decide later not to stay in the research?**

Your participation is voluntary. If you choose to take part now, you may change your mind and withdraw later. In addition, if you participate in an interview, you can choose to skip questions that you are not comfortable answering or stop the interview at any time. You may also withdraw your consent for the use of responses you provided during the interview. However, once we have removed identifiers, you can no longer withdraw your responses, as we may not know which ones are yours.

### **Who can I call if I have questions?**

If you have questions about participating in this research, you can contact the Principal Investigator:, Dr. Kiran Garimella, at [kg766@rutgers.edu](mailto:kg766@rutgers.edu). You can also contact the research assistant on this project, Kaitlyn Rich, at [kaitlyn.rich@rutgers.edu](mailto:kaitlyn.rich@rutgers.edu)

If you have questions, concerns, problems, information, or input about the research or would like to know your rights as a research participant, you can contact the Rutgers Institutional Review Board (IRB)/Human Research Protection Program via phone at (973) 972-3608 or (732) 235-9806, via email [irboffice@research.rutgers.edu](mailto:irboffice@research.rutgers.edu), or you can write us at 335 George Street, Liberty Plaza Suite 3200, New Brunswick, NJ 08901, USA.

Please keep this consent form if you would like a copy of it for your files.

Submission of your utility bills permits the investigators named above to utilize your information as described in this consent form.

By completing the survey, you acknowledge that you are 18 years of age or older, have read the information, and agree to take part in the research, with the knowledge that you are free to withdraw your participation without penalty.

By beginning the interview, you acknowledge that you are 18 years of age or older, have read the  
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information, and agree to take part in the research, with the knowledge that you are free to withdraw your participation without penalty.

If you agree to being recorded, your oral agreement permits the investigator named above to audio record you as described above during participation in the above-referenced research.